

*Alexei Tolstoy*

# ORDEAL

*A Trilogy*

Book 1

## The Sisters

Progress Publishers Moscow









*Alexei Tolstoy*

ORDEAL

A Trilogy

STATE PRIZE

1943







*Alfred Hancock*





АЛЕКСЕЙ ТОЛСТОЙ

**ХОЖДЕНИЕ  
ПО МУКАМ**

*Трилогия*

\*

Сестры  
Восемнадцатый год  
Хмурое утро

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО ПРОГРЕСС

Москва

ALEXEI TOLSTOY

# ORDEAL

*A Trilogy*

THE SISTERS

1918

BLEAK MORNING



## The Sisters



PROGRESS PUBLISHERS

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ONULP



## About the Author

Alexei Tolstoy (1883-1945), one of the major Soviet writers, was already known in Russia before the October Revolution of 1917. His first collections of short stories, his early novels and one play came out in 1910-12. In his later works, written on the eve of the revolution, he explored the "genuine life of Russia", as he called it, and turned to history; he regarded contemporaneity as a consequence of historical events. "Perhaps more instinctively as an artist than consciously I sought in this theme a key to the Russian people and Russian statehood," he wrote. But still, he did not immediately understand the revolution, and left the country in 1918.

However, the whole course of historical events, and his enormous love for his Motherland, made him alter his views. Breaking with the émigrés in 1922, Tolstoy published a unique literary manifesto dictated by patriotism and a desire to do his share in building up his country. In 1923, Tolstoy returned to the Soviet Union.

This "big, precious, happy talent", as Maxim Gorky called him, did very much for Soviet literature, of which he was one of the founders. Tolstoy's historical novels *Ordeal* and *Peter the First*, his science-fiction stories *Aelita* and *The Garin Death Ray*, his short novels and stories, books for children, plays, and brilliant publicist writings during the Great Patriotic War, are very popular in both the Soviet Union and abroad.

Alexei Tolstoy was the founder of the new, Soviet historical novel. He expressed his writer's credo as follows: "There are four epochs I want to portray: the reign of Ivan the Terrible, that of Peter the Great, the period of the Civil War 1918-20, and our own modern times, an epoch unparalleled in scope and significance. But of this anon. In order to understand the secret of the Russian people, their greatness, one must make a profound study of the past—our history, its main turning points and the tragic and creative epochs when the Russian character was being formed."

Tolstoy worked on his trilogy *Ordeal* (*The Sisters*, 1918, *Bleak Morning*) for over twenty years—from 1919 to 1941. The book, begun abroad as a story of one family or a small group of Russian intel-

lectuals, developed into a narrative about the Russian land, and about the Russian people who had attained their freedom. The main theme of the first book is a search for illusory personal happiness, a life lived for love. But the revolution came—the greatest event in world history—and every honest person had to deal with his small, private problems in their relation to the great, common issue.

"In *Ordeal* the theme may be defined as a country lost and found. We came to understand the meaning of home through profound suffering and struggle," wrote Tolstoy. "*Ordeal* is, in fact, the ordeal of the author with his remorse, sufferings, hopes, depression and joys. The book conveys the feeling of a whole enormous epoch, which began just before the First World War and ended on the first day of the second."

# **The Sisters**





**"O! RUSSIAN LAND!"**

*The Lay of the Host of Igor*

\* I \*

**A** stranger of a thoughtful turn of mind, newly arrived in Petersburg from the leafy side streets of some suburban resort, would have experienced complex sensations of mental excitement and spiritual oppression.

Wandering along the straight, misty streets, past bleak unlighted houses, each with a drowsing porter at the gate; resting his gaze on the full, sombre expanse of the Neva, on the bluish lines of bridges, lit up some time before dark, and flanked by grim cheerless palaces with pillared façades; look-

ing up at the Peter-Paul Cathedral, so un-Russian in its dizzying height, and down at the shabby boats, their prows constantly plunging into the dark water, and the innumerable barges laden with damp logs, ranged along the granite quays; peering into the faces of the passers-by, faces pale and careworn, with eyes as sombre as the city itself—the stranger, would, if well-disposed, have merely huddled deeper into his coat-collar, or, if disaffected, have told himself that it wouldn't be a bad idea to deliver a crashing blow, and shatter all this petrified magic into smithereens.

As far back as the time of Peter the Great, a sexton from the Church of the Trinity, not far from the Trinity Bridge, where it stands to this day, was alarmed, while descending the belfry steps in the dusk, by the apparition of a haggard wench with uncovered head, and rushed to a tavern, where he shouted out: "Petersburg is doomed!", for which he was seized, questioned under torture in the Secret Chancellery, and ruthlessly knouted.

The persistent rumours that there was something uncanny about Petersburg may have dated from this time. Some there were who claimed to have seen with their own eyes the devil driving along the streets of Vasilyevsky Island in a droshky. Others had seen the bronze emperor leap from his granite pedestal at midnight, and gallop over the paving stones in a storm at high tide. And a corpse—that of an official—was said to have pressed its face against the window of a privy councillor's carriage. Many such tales were current in the town.

And quite recently the poet Alexei Alexeyevich Bessonov, crossing a hump-backed bridge on his way to the Islands in a swift, rubber-tired droshky, and gazing through tears at a star visible through a rift in the clouds, told himself that the droshky, and the string of lamps on the bridge and the whole of sleeping Petersburg behind him, were but a dream, a chimera, a figment of his brain, sodden with drink, love-making and boredom.

Two centuries passed like a dream: Petersburg, perched on the edge of the world, amidst swamps and wastelands, dreamed of infinite glory, boundless power. Palace *coups d'état*, regicides, triumphal entries, and bloody executions, flitted by like hallucinations. Weak-minded women enjoyed an almost divine authority; the fate of nations was decided on

tumbled love couches; strapping youths with earth-stained hands appeared upon the scene, and boldly ascended the steps of the throne, to share power, couch, and Byzantine luxury.

Horried eyes were turned from neighbouring countries upon these frenzied exhibitions of fantasy. The Russians themselves regarded the delirium of the capital with fear and dejection. The country was being drained of its lifeblood to feed the insatiable spectres haunting Petersburg.

Petersburg led a nocturnal existence—wild, frigid, sated. Phosphorescent summer nights, crazy and voluptuous; sleepless winter nights; card tables and the clink of gold; music, couples revolving past lighted windows; dashing three-horse sleighs, gypsies, duels at dawn; troops parading in the icy wind to the piercing wailings of fifes, beneath the formidable Byzantine eye of the tsar. Such was the life of the town.

Huge enterprises had sprung up with incredible rapidity during the last ten years, and princely fortunes seemed to have materialized from the air. From glass and cement were erected banks, music halls and skating rinks, as well as luxurious restaurants whose patrons were stunned by music, dazzled by gleaming mirrors, and the spectacle of half-naked women, and befuddled with champagne. Gambling clubs, houses of assignation, theatres, cinemas, and entertainment parks were hastily opened. Engineers and financiers worked on plans for the building of a new capital of unprecedented luxury on an island not far from Petersburg which had never yet been inhabited or built on.

There was an outbreak of suicides in the town. The law courts were thronged with hysterical women, greedily imbibing the gory details of sensational trials. Everything was to be obtained for money—luxury and women. Depravity was everywhere, it spread to the Court like a plague.

And in the palace itself an illiterate peasant, wild-eyed and powerfully built, made his way to the very throne of the emperor—there, derisive, cynical, to bring infamy upon Russia.

Like all great cities, Petersburg led a tense, preoccupied life of its own. This life was ruled by its central force, which never really merged with what might be called the spirit of the town. The central force aimed at the establishment of order, quiet and decency, and the spirit of the town aimed

at the destruction of the central force. The spirit of destruction pervaded everything; its mortal poison permeated the vast financial speculations of the celebrated Sashka Sakelman, the sullen rancour of the steel-plant worker, the disjointed aspirations of the fashionable poetess sitting up till five in the morning in the theatrical basement of "The Red Sleigh Bells." Even those whose duty it was to combat destruction unconsciously did everything to increase its scope and intensity.

These were the days when love, and all sane and kindly emotions were regarded as commonplace and old-fashioned, when people felt not love, but desire, their vitiated appetites craving for something pungent to burn up their vitals.

Girls concealed their innocence, married couples, their faithfulness. Destructiveness was considered a sign of good taste, neurasthenia, a sign of refinement. Fashionable writers, who seemed to have sprung from nowhere in a single season, preached these doctrines. People invented vices and perversions for themselves—anything rather than be considered a bore.

Such was Petersburg in 1914. Worn out by sleepless nights, drowning its melancholy in drink and gold, stifling it with loveless love, and the piercing, impotently sensuous strains of the tango—that dance of death—it lived as if in anxious expectation of some fatal, fearful day. And signs were not lacking that this day was approaching—the new and strange oozed from every chink.

## \* II \*

"...What do we want with memories? We say: 'That'll do! Turn your backside on the past!' Who's that behind me? The Venus de Milo? Well—is she good to eat? Will she make my hair grow? I don't see what good that marble carcass is supposed to do me! Art, you say? You still like titillating yourself with that idea? Look around you, in front, on the ground! You're wearing American shoes. Three cheers for American shoes! A red automobile, rubber tires, a gallon of petrol, and seventy miles an hour—that's art! It makes one long to devour space. And here's art for you: a 40-foot poster, depicting a smart young man, in a top hat shining like the



sun. It's the tailor who's the artist, the genius of today. I want to devour life itself, and you offer me soothing syrup for impotents. . . ."

Laughter and applause rang out from the end of the narrow hall, beyond the seats, where the students from the courses and the university stood closely packed. The speaker, Sergei Sergeyevich Sapozhkov, his moist lips curved in a smile, settled the precariously balanced pince-nez on the bridge of his big nose and blithely descended the steps of the great oak rostrum.

On one side of the hall were the members of the "Philosophical Evenings Society," seated behind a long table lit by two five-branched sconces. Here were the chairman of the Society, professor of divinity Antonovsky, the historian Velyaminov, the lecturer for the evening the philosopher Borsky, and that astute writer Sakunin.

That winter, the "Philosophical Evenings Society" had undergone violent assaults from certain little known but extremely vituperative young people. These attacked the venerable writers and respected philosophers with such virulence, and uttered sentiments so audacious and alluring, that the old mansion on the Fontanka in which the society was housed was filled to overflowing on Saturdays, when its meetings were thrown open to the public. This particular evening was no exception. As soon as Sapozhkov, amidst gusts of applause, had disappeared in the crowd, a short man, with a knobby, cropped head, and a youthful, sallow, high-cheeked countenance, ascended the steps of the rostrum. This was Akundin, a comparatively new arrival. His popularity was immense, especially among the back benches, but when it was asked who he was, and where he came from, those in the know smiled enigmatically. It was, however, known that Akundin was not his real name, that he had just come from abroad, and that he had reasons of his own for speaking here.

Fingering his sparse beard, Akundin glanced round the hushed hall with a faint smile on his lips before beginning to speak.

In the third row, just at the gangway, sat a young girl in a high-necked dress of black cloth, her chin propped on her fist. Her fine, ash-blond hair was swept behind her ears into a great knot, held in place by a comb. Neither moving nor

smiling, she scrutinized the group around the baize-covered table, her eyes every now and then resting on the flames of the candles.

When Akundin, banging on the oak reading desk, exclaimed: "World economics will deal the first blow of its mailed fist at the church dome!" the girl sighed, and, removing her fist from beneath her flushed chin, popped a caramel into her mouth.

Akundin continued.

"...and you are still indulging in vague dreams of the Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth. But for all your efforts They continue to sleep. Or do you hope They will wake up, after all, and speak, like Balaam's ass? They'll wake up all right, but it will not be the honeyed voices of your poets or the fumes of your incense that wakes Them—the People can only be waked by factory sirens. They will awake and speak, and their voices will be harsh in your ears. Or are you still relying upon your marshes and wastelands? I grant you it may be possible to go on dozing here another fifty years. Only don't call your dozing the cult of the Messiah. Your dreams belong not to the future, but to the past. The Russian muzhik has been invented here, in Petersburg, in this splendid hall. Hundreds of volumes have been written about him, operas have been composed. I fear this entertaining occupation may end in bloodshed. . . ."

Here the chairman interrupted the speaker. Akundin smiled faintly, drew a large handkerchief out of his coat pocket, and mopped his face and head with characteristic gestures. Shouts came from the back of the hall.

"Let him speak!"

"It's a shame to muzzle a man!"

"It's sheer mockery!"

"Quiet there at the back!"

"Quiet yourselves!"

Akundin continued:

"The Russian muzhik is a peg to hang theories on. Quite true. But if these theories are not integrally bound up with his age-long aspirations, with the instinctive conception of justice that he shares with the rest of mankind, they will be like the seed which fell upon stony ground. And until people begin to regard the Russian muzhik as just a human being with an empty stomach and a back galled by toil, until they

divest him of the Messianic features which some fine gentleman once upon a time invented for him, two diametrically opposed poles will continue their tragic existence—your splendid theories, conceived in the dimness of the study—and the people themselves, with whom you wish to have nothing whatever to do. No essential criticism of yourselves is here intended. It would be irrational to waste time investigating such a conglomeration of—er—human fantasy. No! Our advice to you is to escape before it is too late. For your ideas and your treasures will be ruthlessly cast upon the dust heap of history.”

The girl in the black cloth dress was in no mood to trouble her head about what was said from oak rostrums. It seemed to her that, while of course all these words and arguments were extremely important, and full of significance, the really important thing was something totally different, something these people never mentioned. . . .

Just then a newcomer appeared at the baize-covered table. Seating himself with unhurried movements next to the chairman, he bowed right and left, stroking his fair hair, still wet from the snow, with frost-reddened fingers. Hiding his hands beneath the edge of the table, he sat erect in his close-fitting black frock coat, displaying a lean, opaque-skinned countenance, arched brows, enormous dark-ringed grey eyes, and a mop of hair. Alexei Alexeyevich Bessonov was exactly like his latest portrait in a weekly magazine.

The girl now had eyes for nothing but this face, with its almost repellent beauty. It was with something like awe that she regarded the strange features which had haunted her dreams during so many stormy Petersburg nights.

There he was, inclining his ear towards his neighbour, and smiling, and his smile was almost naïve; but in the cut of the fine nostrils, in the effeminate brows, in the marked but subtle power of the whole face, were treachery and arrogance, and something else which she could not define, but which affected her more than all the rest.

Velyaminov, the lecturer, red-faced and bearded, in gold-rimmed glasses, his great cranium fringed with tufts of fair, greying hair, was now replying to Akundin.

“You’re as much in the right as an avalanche hurtling down from a mountaintop is right. We have long been awaiting the onset of a terrible era, and we have foreseen the triumph of

your truths. It is *you*, not we, who will rule the elements. But we know, also, that nothing will remain of the higher justice you hope to attain by means of factory sirens, but a heap of rubble, a chaos, amidst which man, stunned and bewildered, will grope helplessly. 'I thirst!' will be his cry, for he will find himself without a drop of the divine fluid. Beware!" Velyaminov, raising a forefinger as long and straight as a pencil, surveyed the rows of listening faces severely through his glasses. "In the paradise of which you dream, for the sake of which you are ready to convert man into a living mechanism, number so-and-so—a human being into a syllogism—in this terrible paradise, lurks the menace of a new revolution. The most terrible of all revolutions—the revolution of the spirit!"

Akundin replied coldly from his seat:

"A human being into a syllogism—that's idealism, too!"

Velyaminov flung out his hands, leaning over the rostrum. The flames of the candles brought out high lights on his bald spot. He began to speak of the sin into which the world would fall, and of the terrible reckoning to come. There was coughing in the hall.

In the interval the girl went to the refreshment room, where she stood at the door, frowning and preoccupied. A few barristers and their wives were drinking tea, talking louder than anyone else in the room. The famous writer Chernobylin was sitting near the stove eating fish and cranberry sauce, and casting angry drunken glances at people passing him. Two middle-aged literary ladies, with dingy necks, and enormous bows in their hair, were munching sandwiches at the counter. A little apart, not mingling with the laity, a few priests stood about in dignified postures. Under the hanging candelabra, his hands folded beneath the skirts of his long frock coat, a man stood balancing himself on his heels, his greying locks in picturesque disarray. This was the critic Chirva, waiting for somebody to approach him. Velyaminov appeared, and one of the literary ladies rushed at him and fastened upon his coat sleeve. The other suddenly stopped eating, brushed away the crumbs from the front of her dress, bent her head, and opened her eyes wide. Bessonov went up to her, bowing affably right and left.

The girl in the black dress could feel in all her nerves how the literary lady was drawing herself up inside her stays.

Bessonov said something to her with a lazy smile. She flung out her plump hands, laughing and rolling her eyes.

Hitching up one shoulder, the girl went out of the refreshment room. Somebody called her name. A dark emaciated youth in a velveteen jacket was pushing his way towards her through the crowd. Nodding joyfully, his nose crinkled with delight, he took her hand. He had a moist palm, a moist lock on his forehead, and long, moist black eyes, from which he gazed at her with moist tenderness. His name was Alexander Ivanovich Zhirov.

"What are you doing here, Darya Dmitrevna?" he cried.

"Just what you are," she replied, freeing her hand and thrusting it into her muff, where she dried it on her handkerchief.

He giggled, bestowing a still more tender glance upon her.

"Don't tell me you didn't like Sapozhkov this time! He spoke like a prophet. I know his abrupt manner and peculiar way of expressing himself irritate you. But the essence of his thought—isn't it just what we all secretly desire, and dare not put into words? And he dares. Listen to this:

*We are young!  
We are famished!  
We will devour the void!*

It's all so extraordinary, so new, so daring, Darya Dmitrevna! D'you mean to say you don't feel it? It's the new life thrusting upwards. It's our own, it's new, it's voracious, it's bold! Take Akundin, now! He's too rationalistic, I admit, but how he drives each nail in! A few more such winters, and everything will crack, everything will give at the seams! Marvelous!"

He spoke in low tones, smiling with saccharine tenderness. Dasha could feel how everything inside him was quivering, as if from some intense emotion. Without waiting to hear him out, she nodded and began pushing her way to the cloakroom.

The grumpy, bemedalled attendant, his arms burdened with coats and galoshes, took no notice of Dasha's outstretched tag. She had to wait a long time, the draught stealing round her ankles through the continually swaying door opening on the dismantled vestibule, where tall izvozchiks in their

damp blue robes stood proffering their services with gay impudence to departing guests.

"My horse is swift, Excellency!"

"Going your way, Sir! To Peskee!"

The sound of Bessonov's voice came suddenly from behind Dasha.

"Attendant—my coat, cap, and stick!" he was saying in cold, distinct tones.

Dasha's skin crept. Turning her head swiftly, she looked straight into Bessonov's eyes. He met her glance calmly, as if it were his due, but suddenly his lids quivered, his grey eyes became moist and animated, as if in surrender, and Dasha's heart fluttered.

"I think we met at your sister's, didn't we?" he said bending towards her.

"Yes, we did," replied Dasha brusquely.

Snatching her coat from the hands of the attendant, she ran to the main entrance. Out in the street, the chill damp breeze seized her dress, spattering her with grimy raindrops. She muffled herself up to the eyes in her fur collar. Somebody coming up from behind exclaimed right into her ear: "My, what peepers!"

Dasha stepped rapidly over the damp asphalt, in and out of the quivering shafts of electric light. The wailing of violins playing a waltz was wafted through the opening door of a restaurant. And Dasha, not looking round, crooned into the shaggy fur of her muff:

"It's not so simple! It's not so simple!"

### \* III \*

Unbuttoning her wet coat in the hall, Dasha said to the maid:

"I suppose there's nobody at home!"

The Grand Mogul—the name given to Lusha, the maid, on account of her face, as broad as an idol's, and thickly powdered—said in her reedy voice, with a glance at herself in the mirror, that Madam, it was true, was out, but that the Master was at home, in his study, and wanted supper in half an hour.

Going into the drawing room, Dasha seated herself at the

grand piano, crossing her knees and encircling one of them in her clasped hands.

Since her brother-in-law, Nikolai Ivanovich, was at home, he must have quarrelled with his wife, and would be sulky and querulous. It was only eleven, and there was nothing for her to do till she could fall asleep at 3 o'clock. One might read—but what? Besides, she didn't want to read. And she couldn't just sit and think. Life could be pretty bleak sometimes!

Dasha sighed, lifted the lid of the piano, and, sitting sideways to the keyboard, began picking out the melody of a piece by Scriabine with one hand. At the awkward age of nineteen, life is bound to be hard, especially if one is a girl, and far from stupid, and if an idiotic puritanism makes one unnecessarily hard on those—and there were plenty!—who would have been only too glad to dispel one's virginal tedium.

Dasha had come from Samara the year before, to study law in Petersburg, while living with her elder sister, Ekaterina Dmitrevna Smokovnikova. Her sister's husband was a lawyer, and a fairly well-known one, and they led an extravagant, exuberant life.

Dasha was almost five years younger than her sister, and had been still a child when Ekaterina Dmitrevna married. The sisters had seen very little of one another in the intervening years, and a new relationship had sprung up between them—Dasha adoring, Ekaterina Dmitrevna quietly affectionate.

Lost in admiration of her sister's beauty, taste, and social ease, Dasha had begun by copying her slavishly. She was shy with Katya's friends, though her shyness made her cheeky with some of them. Ekaterina Dmitrevna tried to make her home a model of taste, admitting into it only novelties still undiscovered by the multitude. She never missed an exhibition, and made a point of buying futurist paintings. Of late this had led to violent altercations with her husband, who liked pictures "with an idea behind them," while Ekaterina Dmitrevna, with feminine ardour, preferred suffering in the cause of the new art to the risk of being considered old-fashioned.

Dasha, too, admired these strange pictures on the drawing-room walls, while admitting sadly that the angular figures with geometrical countenances, and more hands and feet than

strictly necessary, the muted neuralgic colours—and this cast-iron, cynical art—were too great a tax on her limited imagination.

A gay, noisy company assembled every Tuesday at the Smokovnikovs', for supper in the Smokovnikovs' dining room, with the bird's-eye maple suite. It was composed of garrulous lawyers, highly susceptible to feminine charms, and zealous followers of new literary trends; a few journalists, quite sure that they knew how domestic and foreign policy ought to be conducted; the critic Chirva, with his disordered nervous system, ever concocting yet another literary catastrophe. Sometimes, among the earliest arrivals, there would be a few young poets, who left manuscript copies of poetry in the pockets of their overcoats. A celebrity would arrive just as supper was being served, advancing with unhurried steps to kiss the hand of the hostess, and sinking with dignity into the chair allotted to him. In the middle of supper, leather overshoes would drop with a bang in the hall, and a velvety voice would be heard exclaiming:

"Greetings to you, Grand Mogul!" The next moment, a clean-shaven face with flabby jowls, the face of the traditional stage lover, would be bent over the hostess' chair:

"Katyusha! Your paw!"

For Dasha, the central figure at these suppers was her sister. Furious with anyone who seemed to neglect the good-natured, artless Ekaterina Dmitrevna, she was jealous of those who, on the contrary, seemed too attentive, and would stare angrily at offenders.

She had gradually begun to find her bearings in this ocean of faces, at first so bewildering. She soon learned to look down on mere deputy barristers, whose sole marks of distinction were their shaggy cutaways, violet ties, and partings from brow to nape. She detested the stage lover—what right had he to call her sister Katya, and the Grand Mogul, the Grand Mogul? What right had he to shoot a glance at Dasha from his hooded eyes over the rim of a glass of vodka, and declaim:

"I drink to the almond tree in blossom!"

It made Dasha choke with rage every time he did this.

Her cheeks really were rosy, there was no getting rid of that accursed almond-blossom tint, which made Dasha feel like a painted wooden doll in this refined company.



Dasha did not go back for the summer holidays to her father in dusty, sultry Samara, joyfully consenting to stay at the seaside with her sister, in Sestroretsk. Here they met the people they had mixed with in the winter, but still more frequently—boating, bathing, eating ices under the pines, listening to music of an evening, and partaking of noisy suppers under the stars, on the verandah of the Casino.

Ekaterina Dmitrevna had a white embroidered dress made for Dasha, with a broad silk sash tied in a great bow at the back, and a big hat of white gauze with a black ribbon round it, and Nikanor Yurevich Kulichok, her brother-in-law's deputy, suddenly fell in love with the girl, as if his eyes had only just been opened to her charms.

But he belonged to the "despised" class. Dasha was indignant, and invited him for a walk in the woods, in order, without allowing him to say a word in his defence (all he could do was to mop his brow with the handkerchief squeezed in his fist), to tell him that she wouldn't stand being treated as a "mere female," that she was indignant, that he had a diseased imagination, and that she would complain to her brother-in-law immediately.

And the same evening she did complain to her brother-in-law. Nikolai Ivanovich heard her out in silence, stroking his well-kept beard and glancing with astonishment at the angry flush on Dasha's cheeks, at the fiercely quivering brim of the "picture hat," at her whole slender, white-robed figure. When she had finished he sat down at the water's edge and laughed till he cried, mopping his eyes with his handkerchief, and exclaiming:

"Go away, Darya, go away—you'll be the death of me!"

And Dasha, bewildered and upset, had gone away. Kulichok who had grown thinner and begun to shun society, now dared not even look at her. Dasha's honour was saved. But this episode had stirred up feelings hitherto locked in virginal slumber. A subtle balance had been upset, as if some other person—stuffy, dreamy, shapeless, disgusting—had taken possession of Dasha from top to toe. Dasha was aware of this person throughout her being, and suffered as if from the proximity of something unclean. She wished she could brush away the invisible cobweb, and become once more fresh, cool, light.

She played tennis by the hour now, bathed twice a day, and got up early, while great drops of dew were still gleaming on the leaves, a mist was hovering over the purple, mirrorlike surface of the sea, damp tables were being set out on the verandah, and the moist, sandy paths were being swept.

But as soon as she warmed up in the sunlight, or in her warm, soft bed at night, that other being raised its head, made its furtive way into her heart, and gave it a squeeze with its soft paw. She could not tear it out of herself, and—like the bloodstains on Bluebeard's key—no amount of washing would obliterate it.

All who saw her just now—her sister the first—noticed that Dasha had much improved in looks this summer, and was getting prettier every day. Ekaterina Dmitrevna, going into her sister's room one morning, said:

"What's going to happen next?"

"How d'you mean, Katya?"

Dasha was seated in her chemise on the edge of her bed, twisting her hair into a great knot.

"You're getting awfully pretty, you know—what are we going to do about it?"

Dasha looked at her sister from great fringed eyes, and turned her head away. Her cheek and ear were suffused with colour.

"I wish you wouldn't talk like that, Katya—you know I don't like it!"

Ekaterina Dmitrevna sat down on the bed, and pressed her cheek against Dasha's naked back, laughing and kissing her sister between the shoulder blades.

"How touchy we are!" she said.

One day there appeared on the tennis court a lean, clean-shaven Englishman, with a jutting chin and childlike eyes, and so faultlessly attired that some of Ekaterina Dmitrevna's young men became quite low-spirited. He invited Dasha to play a set with him, and played like a machine. It seemed to Dasha that throughout the game he never glanced at her, but looked past her all the time. She lost, and proposed another set. To give herself more freedom, she rolled up the sleeves of her white blouse. A lock of hair escaped from beneath her piqué cap, and she did not tuck it in. Dasha, standing up to the net to beat off the ball with a formidable drive, thought to herself:

"The deft Russian girl has an elusive grace in all her movements, and the flush on her cheek is extremely attractive. . . ."

Again the Englishman won. Invariably correct, he bowed, lit a fragrant cigarette, seated himself not far off, and called for a lemon squash.

While playing a third set—this time with a famous school-boy player—Dasha shot an oblique glance at the Englishman every now and then. He was sitting at a small table, nursing a silk-clad ankle laid across his knee, his straw hat pushed well back, and gazing out to sea, never once turning his head.

That night, lying in bed, Dasha recalled all these details. With merciless clarity she saw herself plunging about the court, red-faced, a tuft of hair sticking out from under her cap, and wept from wounded vanity, and from some feeling that she was unable to overcome.

From that day she ceased to go to the tennis courts. Once Ekaterina Dmitrevna said to her:

"Dasha, Mr. Bailey asks after you every day—why don't you play any more?"

Dasha's jaw dropped in sheer panic. Then she said angrily that she wasn't going to listen to idiotic gossip, that she didn't know any Mr. Bailey, and what's more, she didn't want to, and that it was great cheek of him to think she had stopped playing that idiotic tennis on his account. She refused to go to dinner, and went to the woods instead, her pockets full of bread and gooseberries, and there, amidst the warm, resinous fragrance of the pine trees, she told herself, winding her way among the tall red stems, with murmuring summits, that the wretched truth could no longer be concealed—she was in love with the Englishman, and desperately unhappy.

From now on, that "other being," gradually raising its head higher and higher, increased in stature inside Dasha. At first its presence was intolerable, like something unclean, painful—sheer annihilation. But she soon became accustomed to this complicated sensation, just as women become accustomed, when the summer, with its refreshing breezes and cooling streams, is over, to lacing themselves into corsets, and putting on thick dresses.

Her self-centred infatuation for the Englishman lasted a fortnight. Dasha hated herself, and was furious with him. Every now and then she watched him from afar, playing tennis with lazy skill, or having supper with Russian sailors,

and she told herself despairingly that he was the most attractive creature in the world.

And then a tall, thin girl in white flannels suddenly appeared at his side—she was his fiancée and an Englishwoman, of course—and they left together. Dasha spent a sleepless night, hating herself with a kind of fierce distaste, and towards morning told herself that this should be the last mistake she would ever make.

The decision calmed her, and she was astonished to see how quickly and easily everything passed. But everything had not passed. Dasha felt that this "other being" had now fused its identity with hers, had become dissolved in her own being, and vanished, and that the whole of her had become "different," just as light and fresh as she had been before, but somehow softer, tenderer, more mysterious; her very skin seemed to be more delicate, and she could hardly recognize her own face in the mirror now—especially the eyes. Such eyes! It made your head swim to look into them.

In the middle of August the Smokovnikovs and Dasha returned to Petersburg, to their big apartment on Panteleimonov Street. Once again Tuesday at-homes, picture shows, noisy first nights, notorious trials, the purchasing of paintings, enthusiasm for the past, all-night excursions to the gypsies in the "Samarkand," an out-of-town restaurant. Once again the stage lover appeared, minus twenty-three pounds of flesh sloughed off at a spa, and to all these restless pleasures were added vague, deliciously alarming rumours of impending change.

Dasha had no time now for thinking or feeling. In the mornings there were lectures, at four o'clock a walk with her sister, in the evening a theatre, a concert, supper, and people, people . . . never a moment to oneself.

On one of the Tuesdays, after supper, while everyone was sitting over coffee and liqueurs, Alexei Alexeyevich Bessonov entered the drawing room. As soon as she caught sight of him in the doorway Ekaterina Dmitrevna blushed crimson. The hum of conversation subsided. Bessonov seated himself on the sofa, and accepted a cup of coffee from the hands of Ekaterina Dmitrevna.

Two barristers, connoisseurs of literature, approached him, but Bessonov, fixing a long, strange gaze on his hostess, remarked abruptly that there was no such thing as art, that

it was all a fake, the old trick of the fakir who makes a monkey climb a rope and disappear into thin air.

"There's no such thing as poetry. Everything has been extinct for ages—people, art, everything. Russia is mere offal, with a flock of crows hovering over it at a crow's banquet. And all who write poetry will find themselves in hell one day."

He spoke quietly, in muffled tones. On his pale, angry face burned two spots of colour. His soft collar was creased, and his coat was flecked with cigarette ash. The coffee from the tiny cup in his hand was trickling on to the carpet.

The connoisseurs of literature would have taken up the argument, but Bessonov, not listening to them, followed Ekaterina Dmitrevna with a darkening glance. Then he rose, and went up to her, and Dasha could hear him say:

"I can't stand company. Allow me to go away."

Timidly, she asked him to read them something. He shook his head, and stood so long taking his leave, with Ekaterina Dmitrevna's hand pressed to his lips, that she felt herself blushing all over.

When he had gone, an argument arose. The men unanimously declared that "after all there are limits, and such obvious contempt for society cannot be allowed." The critic Chirva went from one to another, saying: "He was dead-drunk, gentlemen!" The women decided that "Bessonov, whether drunk, or just in one of his moods, is an exciting person, and we don't care who knows it!"

The next day, at dinner, Dasha said that Bessonov was one of those "real" persons in whose emotions, sins, tastes, Ekaterina Dmitrevna's whole circle lived, as in a reflected light. "I can easily understand a woman losing her head over such a man, Katya!"

Nikolai Ivanovich was indignant.

"You're simply bowled over by his fame, Dasha!"

Ekaterina Dmitrevna said nothing. Bessonov did not appear at the Smokovnikovs' again. It was rumoured that he was always hanging about the dressing room of the actress Charodeyeva. Kulichok went with some friends to see this Charodeyeva, and came back disappointed—she was nothing but skin and bone, a mere bundle of lace petticoats. . . .

Once Dasha met Bessonov at an exhibition. He was standing at a window listlessly turning the pages of a catalogue,

while two stumpy girl students stood in front of him as if he were a figure in a wax-work show, gazing at him with fixed smiles on their faces. Dasha passed slowly by, and sank into a chair in the next room—her legs had suddenly gone weak, and she felt melancholy.

After this, Dasha bought Bessonov's photograph, and placed it on her table. His poems—three small white volumes—had acted on her like a sort of poison at first, and she had gone about for several days as if under a spell, feeling like an accomplice in some mysterious, evil deed. But after reading and rereading them, she began to take pleasure in this painful sensation—voices seemed to be whispering to her to forget everything, to relax, to trample down and squander some cherished treasure, to yearn for something that had never yet been.

It was on Bessonov's account that she had begun going to the "Philosophical Evenings." He always arrived there late, and rarely spoke, but Dasha returned home singularly moved each time, and was glad to find visitors. She no longer suffered from wounded vanity.

And now here she is, picking out a Scriabine melody in solitude. Like icy pellets the sounds sink into her soul, as into the depths of a dark, bottomless lake. Falling, they ruffle the glittering surface, and sink, the liquid incessantly ebbing and flowing, while, somewhere deep down, the heart thuds with a hollow, anxious sound, as if soon, very soon, this very moment, something quite impossible is going to happen.

Dasha let her hands fall on to her knees, and raised her head. In the soft light of the orange-shaded lamp, wry countenances, purplish, bloated, with bulging eyeballs, looked down from the walls, like phantoms from some antediluvian chaos, greedily licking the railings of the Garden of Eden on the first day of creation.

"We're in a bad way, dear lady," said Dasha to herself. Her fingers ran violently up a scale, she closed the piano soundlessly, took a cigarette from a Japanese box, lit it, gave a choking cough, and crushed it against the bottom of the ashtray.

"Nikolai Ivanovich, what's the time?" she shouted loud enough to be heard four doors away.

Something fell on to the floor in the study, but there was no reply. The Grand Mogul appeared in the doorway, and announced, with a glance at herself in the mirror, that supper was served.

Dasha took a seat in the dining room in front of a vase of fading flowers, and began nipping off their heads and letting them fall on the tablecloth. The Grand Mogul brought in tea, some cold meat, and fried eggs. At last Nikolai Ivanovich made his appearance, in a new blue suit, but collarless. His hair was tousled, his beard hung askew, a bit of fluff in it.

He bowed coldly to Dasha, and took his seat at the head of the table; pulling the pan of eggs towards him, he began to eat voraciously.

After a few minutes he leaned his elbow on the edge of the table, propping his cheek against his great hairy fist, gazed with unseeing eyes at the heap of petals, and said in a deep, unnatural voice:

"Last night your sister was unfaithful to me."

#### \* IV \*

Katya, her own sister, had done something terrible, incomprehensible, black. Last night her head had lain on the pillow, turned away from all that was living, warm, familiar, and her body had been crushed, distorted. It was thus that the trembling Dasha understood what Nikolai Ivanovich called unfaithfulness. And to crown all, Katya was not at home, as if she no longer existed in the world.

For a moment Dasha was stunned. Her head went round. Holding her breath, she waited for Nikolai Ivanovich to burst into sobs, or to shout out something terrible. But he added not a syllable to his communication, merely twiddling a knife rest between his fingers. Dasha did not venture to look into his face.

At last, after a prolonged silence, he moved his chair noisily back from the table, and went to his study. "He'll shoot himself," thought Dasha. But this did not happen, either. She remembered with acute, momentary pity how hairy his great fist had looked on the tablecloth. Then he swam out of her ken, and Dasha could only repeat: "What's

to be done? What's to be done?" There was a ringing in her ears, everything was smashed and defaced—everything!

The Grand Mogul appeared with a tray from behind the heavy curtain, and Dasha, glancing at her, suddenly realized that soon there wouldn't be any more Grand Mogul. Her eyes filled with tears, and she ran into the drawing room, her teeth tightly clenched.

Here, everything, down to the merest trifle, had been lovingly set in place and arranged by Katya's own hands. But Katya's soul had abandoned this room, and everything in it had become alien and cheerless. Dasha sat down on the sofa. Gradually her gaze came to rest on a recently purchased picture. And for the first time she saw and understood the subject of it.

It was a picture of a naked woman, putrid-red in colour, as if flayed. Her mouth was on one side, the nose nothing but a triangular gap, her head rectangular, with a rag glued to it—a scrap of actual material. The legs were like hinged logs, and one hand held a flower. The remaining details were appalling, and most appalling of all was the corner, opaquely brown, in which the figure sprawled. The picture was called "Love," and Katya had named it the Modern Venus.

"So that's why Katya was so keen on this accursed female! Now she's like that herself—with a flower, in a corner." Dasha buried her face in the sofa and wept, biting the cushion to prevent herself from crying out. Some time after, Nikolai Ivanovich came into the room. His legs wide apart, he clicked his cigarette lighter angrily, went up to the piano, and began to pick out notes on it. Suddenly the tune of a street-song emerged. Dasha's blood froze. Nikolai Ivanovich shut the lid of the piano with a bang.

"It was to be expected," he said.

Dasha repeated these words over and over in her mind, trying to penetrate their meaning. The doorbell rang out shrilly and suddenly. Nikolai Ivanovich clutched at his beard, uttered a prolonged "oh!" in a choking voice and made rapidly for his study. The Grand Mogul tap-tapped along the passage, as if on hoofs. Dasha jumped from her seat on the sofa, her heart beating, her head swimming, and ran out into the hall.

Ekaterina Dmitrevna, wrinkling up her nose, was fumbling with numbed fingers at the purple ribbons of her fur hood.



She held out a cold, pink cheek for her sister to kiss, but getting no response, tossed her head, threw back her hood, and looked searchingly at Dasha.

"Is anything the matter here?" she asked, in the deep voice that everybody always found so adorable. "Have you two been quarrelling?"

Dasha stared at Nikolai Ivanovich's leather overshoes. They were known in the family as his "seven-league boots," and she thought they looked lonely and neglected. Her chin trembled.

"Nothing has happened. It's just one of my moods."

Ekaterina Dmitrevna slowly unfastened the big buttons of her squirrel coat, which she shook off with a movement of her bare shoulders, standing there, warm, vulnerable, weary. Bending down to unbutton her gaiters, she said:

"I got my feet wet before I could find a taxi."

Then Dasha, still staring at Nikolai Ivanovich's overshoes, asked severely:

"Where have you been, Katya?"

"At a literary supper, my dear, in God knows whose honour. The same as always. I'm dead-tired—I simply must get to bed." Going into the dining room, she flung her leather handbag on to the table, and asked, dabbing at her nose:

"Who's been nipping off the heads of the flowers? And where's Nikolai Ivanovich? Gone to bed?"

Dasha did not know what to make of it all. Her sister was not a bit like that accursed female, not a bit alien—in fact she had never seemed so near as now. Dasha longed to stroke her.

Recovering her presence of mind with an enormous effort, and scratching the tablecloth with her nail exactly in the place where, half an hour before, Nikolai Ivanovich had sat eating his eggs, Dasha managed to bring out:

"Katya!"

"What is it, ducky?"

"I know everything."

"What do you know? For heaven's sake tell me what has happened?"

Ekaterina Dmitrevna seated herself at the table, her knees touching Dasha's, and looked searchingly at her sister.

"Nikolai Ivanovich has told me everything," said Dasha.

But she did not look at her sister's face, to see how she had taken the announcement.

After a silence which seemed almost unbearably long, Ekaterina Dmitrevna said in angry tones:

"And what was the astounding communication that Nikolai Ivanovich made about me?"

"Katya, you know!"

"No, I don't!"

Her "No, I don't!" was like an icy pellet.

Dasha instantly dropped to the floor in front of her sister.

"Perhaps it isn't true! Katya, darling, my own beautiful sister, tell me—it isn't true, is it?"

She covered with rapid kisses the backs of Katya's soft, perfumed blue-veined hands.

"Of course it isn't true," replied Ekaterina Dmitrevna, closing her eyes wearily. "Don't cry! You'll have red eyes and a swollen nose tomorrow!"

She lifted Dasha up, pressing her lips lingeringly to her sister's hair.

"I've been a fool," whispered Dasha into Katya's bosom.

At this moment, the loud, distinct voice of Nikolai Ivanovich came to them through the door of the study.

"She's lying!"

The sisters turned quickly, but the door was shut.

"Go to bed, child," said Ekaterina Dmitrevna. "And I'll go and see what it's all about. A pleasure, I must say—and me ready to drop!"

She accompanied Dasha to her room, kissed her absent-mindedly, and went back to the dining room, where she picked up her bag, fixed her comb, and tapped gently on the study door with one finger.

"Let me in, please, Nikolai!"

At first there was no reply, but after an ominous silence followed by an angry snort, the key was turned, and Ekaterina Dmitrevna opened the door straight on to the broad back of her husband, who, without turning, walked to the table, seated himself in a leather armchair, and picked up an ivory paper knife which he drew sharply down the open page of his book (Wasserman's *Man of Forty*). All this was done as if Ekaterina Dmitrevna had not been in the room.

She seated herself on the sofa, straightened her skirt over her knees, and, putting her handkerchief back into her bag,

snapped the fastener. At this sound a tuft of hair on the top of Nikolai Ivanovich's head trembled.

"There's only one thing I don't understand," said Ekaterina Dmitrevna. "You are at liberty to think what you choose, but must you impose your suppositions on Dasha?"

At this he turned sharply in his chair, stretching out his neck so that his beard was thrust forward, and said through clenched teeth:

"So you have the impudence to call them suppositions!"

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Excellent! You don't know what I'm talking about! But you seem to know very well how to behave as if you were a street woman."

Ekaterina Dmitrevna opened her mouth ever so slightly, without a word. Glancing at her husband's crimson, perspiring countenance, distorted with rage, she said quietly:

"Since when, if you please, have you begun to insult me?"

"I humbly beg your pardon! But I don't know what tone to adopt. To put it plainly, I should like to know the details."

"What details?"

"Don't lie to my face!"

"Oh, that's what you mean!" Ekaterina Dmitrevna rolled her great eyes as if in the final throes of fatigue. "I told you something or other not long ago, but what exactly I can't remember."

"I want to know who it was."

"I don't know myself."

"Once more I ask you not to lie."

"I'm not lying. Why should I lie to you? Well, I did say so! I say anything when I'm cross. I said it, and I've forgotten it."

While she was speaking Nikolai Ivanovich's face remained stony, but his heart gave a plunge and started beating tremulously. "Thank God, she was just telling lies about herself." This meant that he could now pretend not to believe anything—he could make a row and relieve his feelings with impunity.

He rose from his chair and began to pace up and down, then halted, slicing the air with the ivory paper knife as he held forth on the decline of family life, the decay of morals, the sacred, neglected duties of woman—wife, mother and

helpmate. He reproached Ekaterina Dmitrevna with triviality, with thoughtless waste of money earned with blood ("not blood, but tongue-wagging," corrected Ekaterina Dmitrevna). With *more* than blood—with nerves! He reproached her with carelessness in her choice of acquaintances, with disorder in the home, with her weakness for "that idiot" the Grand Mogul, and even with "the beastly, sickening pictures, in your middle-class drawing room."

In a word, Nikolai Ivanovich unburdened his soul.

It was after three in the morning, and when her husband had talked himself hoarse, Ekaterina Dmitrevna, with the words: "Nothing can be more revolting than a fat man in hysterics," got up, and went into the bedroom.

But not even this had the power to offend Nikolai Ivanovich now. Undressing slowly, he hung his clothes over the back of a chair, wound up his watch, and, with a slight sigh, got into the clean, crisp bed made up for him on the leather sofa.

"Yes, our way of living is all wrong. We must reconstruct our whole lives. All wrong, all wrong," he thought, opening his book to calm himself before falling asleep. But the next minute he let the book fall and listened. All was quiet in the house. Somebody sniffed, and the sound made his heart beat. "She's crying," he thought. "Ah, me! I overdid it."

When he went over the whole conversation mentally, and remembered how Katya had sat listening to him, he began to feel sorry for her. He raised himself on one elbow, ready to jump out of bed, but, suddenly, feeling limp all over, as if after days of fatigue, he dropped his head on the pillow, and fell asleep.

Dasha, undressing in her daintily appointed room, took the comb out of her hair, gave her head a toss which sent all the hairpins flying, crept into her snowy bed, and, covering herself up to her chin, screwed up her eyes. "Thank God, everything's all right! I needn't think of anything—just sleep!" Out of the corner of her eye she seemed to glimpse a whimsical little face. Dasha smiled, drew up her knees, and embraced the pillow. Just as a dark, sweet sleep was beginning to enfold her, Katya's voice rang in her ears: "Of course it isn't true!" Dasha opened her eyes. "But I never said a word to Katya, not a word! I only asked her if it was true, or not. And she answered me just as if she understood perfectly

what I was talking about." She was pierced through and through by the needle-sharp realization: "Katya lied to me." Then, recalling the minutest details of the conversation, all Katya's words and movements, everything grew clear to Dasha: yes, it had all been lies. She was thunderstruck. Katya had betrayed her husband, but while betraying, sinning, lying, she seemed to have become still more fascinating. No one with eyes in his head could have failed to remark in her something new, a strange, weary tenderness. And the way she lied was enough to drive you crazy with love. But she was a criminal, wasn't she? Dasha didn't know what to make of it all.

Thoroughly upset and bewildered, she took a drink of water, lit and extinguished the lamp again and again, and tossed and turned till daylight, feeling that she could neither condemn Katya, nor understand the thing she had done.

Ekaterina Dmitrevna could not sleep that night, either. Lying on her back, drained of strength, her hands stretched out on the silken coverlet, she wept without wiping away the tears, wept because she felt bewildered, polluted, unclean, because there was nothing she could do about it, because she was not passionate and austere, like Dasha, and never would be; she wept because Nikolai Ivanovich had called her a street woman, and had said her drawing room was middle-class. And she wept still more bitterly because, at midnight the night before, Alexei Alexeyevich Bessonov had driven her in a rubber-tired droshky to an out-of-town hotel, and there, unaware, unloving, oblivious of all that was sacred to her, had taken her—unhurriedly, hatefully, as if she had been a wax figure, one of the pink-cheeked mannequins in the window of Madame Duclet's shop of Paris gowns in Morskaya Street.

\* V \*

In the apartment of engineer Ivan Ilyich Telegin, on the fifth floor of a newly-built house on 19th Street, Vasilyevsky Island, was the so-called "Centre for the Struggle against Convention."

As the first tenant Telegin got the apartment at cheap rates for a year. He kept one room for himself, the others, furnished with iron bedsteads, deal tables and stools, he let to

lodgers—light-hearted bachelors all of them. His old friend and former schoolmate, Sergei Sergeyevich Sapozhkov had little trouble in finding people answering to this description.

They were: Alexander Ivanovich Zhirov, law student, Antoshka Arnoldov, journalist and newspaper reporter, the artist Valet, and Elizaveta Rastorguyeva, a young woman who had not as yet found a husband, or an occupation to her taste.

The lodgers got up late. When Telegin came back from the works for lunch they would just be beginning to take up their daily round. Antoshka Arnoldov would take the tram to a café in Nevsky Prospekt, to pick up the latest gossip before going on to the newspaper office where he worked. Valet worked at a self-portrait. Sapozhkov locked himself in to prepare speeches and articles about the New Art. Zhirov would steal into Elizaveta Kievna's room and discuss the problems of life with her in a soft, purring voice. He wrote verse, but was too self-conscious to let anyone see it. Elizaveta Kievna considered him a genius.

Besides conversing with Zhirov and the other lodgers, Elizaveta Kievna knitted many-coloured wools into long strips which did not seem to have any particular purpose, singing Ukrainian songs out of tune the while in a deep powerful voice, or invented remarkable new ways of doing her hair; when, tired of singing, she would let her hair fall over her shoulders, lie down on her bed with a book, and read till her head ached. Elizaveta Kievna was a good-looking, tall, rosy-cheeked girl, with shortsighted eyes which looked as if they had been drawn on the surface of her face. She dressed so flamboyantly that even Telegin's lodgers remonstrated with her.

When a newcomer came to the house she would invite him to her room, where a bewildering conversation would ensue, ranging from dizzy heights to profound depths, as Elizaveta Kievna endeavoured to find out whether her interlocutor had ever felt stirrings towards crime. Was he capable of murder, now? Had he ever experienced an impulse of "self-provocation"? This last was a quality which Elizaveta Kievna regarded as the hallmark of originality. Telegin's lodgers pinned up a list of these questions on her door.

Elizaveta Kievna was really just a dissatisfied girl, continually on the lookout for some violent upheaval, some

"ghastly event," thanks to which life would suddenly become brighter, and a girl could live to the full, instead of languishing at a rain-dimmed window-pane.

Telegin himself found abundant entertainment in observing his lodgers, whom he considered a delightful set of cranks, though he could never find time to share their diversions.

One day, at Christmas time, Sergei Sergeyevich Sapozhkov gathered the lodgers together, and addressed them as follows:

"Comrades, the time for action has come. There are many of us, but we are scattered. Up to the present all our action has been timid and isolated. We must close up our ranks and strike a blow at bourgeois society. To do this we must first form ourselves into a phalanx, and then issue a manifesto. Here it is—I'll read it to you: 'We are the new Columboes! We are the brilliant instigators to action! We are the seed of the new humanity! We demand that bloated bourgeois society cast aside all prejudice. Henceforward there will be no virtues. The family, social amenities, marriage, must all be thrown overboard. We insist on this. Men and women must be naked and free. Sexual relations are the business of society. Youths and maidens! Men and women! Clamber out of the lairs in which you have languished so long, and emerge, naked and happy, to join hands and dance beneath the sun of the Wild Beast!'"

Sapozhkov proceeded to explain that it was absolutely essential to bring out a futurist magazine. It was to be called *The Dish of the Gods*, and Telegin would put up part of the paltry three thousand rubles required to start it—the rest must be snatched from the maw of the bourgeoisie.

Such was the inauguration of the "Centre for the Struggle against Convention." This name was the invention of Telegin, who, coming back from the works one day, laughed till he cried over Sapozhkov's scheme. Preparations for the first number of *The Dish of the Gods* were begun immediately. The necessary three thousand rubles were contributed by a few wealthy art patrons, among whom were some lawyers, and a certain well-known financier. Wrapping paper bearing the abstruse heading "Centrifugal" was ordered for office stationery, approaches were made to those required to fill the principal editorial posts, literary and artistic material collected. The artist Valet suggested that the walls of

Sapozhkov's room, which was to be the headquarters of the new magazine, should be defaced with indecent drawings, and by way of a beginning painted twelve self-portraits on them. Much thought was given to the furnishing of the room. Finally, everything was taken out of it except a large table covered with gilt paper.

As soon as the first number of *The Dish of the Gods* made its appearance, it became the talk of the town. Some were indignant, others declared that there was more in all this than met the eye, and that soon they would be consigning the works of Pushkin to limbo. The critic Chirva quite lost his bearings—*The Dish of the Gods* had called him a swine. Ekaterina Dmitrevna Smokovnikova immediately sent a year's subscription to the magazine, and made up her mind to invite the futurists to one of her Tuesdays.

Sergei Sergeyevich Sapozhkov was delegated by the "Centre" to have supper at the Smokovnikovs'. He turned up in a long coat of dingy green fustian, worn in *Manon Lescaut*, and hired from the theatrical hairdresser. At supper he made a point of eating enormously, laughing so shrilly that the sound even jarred on his own ears; glancing at Chirva he called critics "jackals, eaters of carrion." Then, he threw himself back in his chair, smoking and adjusting the pince-nez on the damp bridge of his nose. On the whole, more had been expected.

After the publication of the second number it was decided to get up evening parties, to be called "Magnificent Blasphemies." Dasha went to one of these "blasphemies." Zhirov opened the front door to her, and immediately began bustling around her, taking off her overshoes and her fur coat, even picking a bit of thread off her cloth dress. Dasha was surprised at the smell of cabbage in the hall. Zhirov, edging his way down the passage behind her to the place of "blasphemy," asked her:

"What scent do you use? It's awfully nice!"

Another thing that astonished Dasha was the homespun quality of all this highly publicized audacity. True, the walls were scattered all over with eyes, noses, hands, indecent figures, falling skyscrapers, in a word all the ingredients of the portrait of Vasili Veniaminovich Valet, who stood there silently, with zigzags drawn on his cheeks. Both hosts and visitors (and almost all the young poets who attended the



Smokovnikovs' Tuesdays were here) had to sit on rough boards, supported on logs (the gift of Telegin), while poems were declaimed in tones of exaggerated insolence about motorcars crawling over the vault of the heavens, about "spitting at the old celestial syphilitic," about the youthful jaws with which the author would crunch up church domes as if they were nuts, about some utterly incredible grasshopper, who, clad in an overcoat, and holding field glasses and a Baedeker, jumped out of the window on to the pavement. But somehow Dasha found all these horrors merely pathetic. The only person she really liked there was Telegin. Amid the general conversation he approached her, and asked her, with a shy smile, if she would like some tea and sandwiches.

"Our tea and sausage are quite normal—they're good," There was something ingenuous about his tanned, clean-shaven face, but the kindly blue eyes looked as if they could be shrewd and hard if necessary.

Just to please him, Dasha consented, and followed him to the dining room. On the table were a plate of sandwiches and a dented samovar. Quickly gathering up the used plates, Telegin dumped them on to the floor in a corner of the room. Unable to find a cloth, he wiped the table with his handkerchief and poured some tea out for Dasha, selecting a sandwich which seemed to be rather more "delicate" than the others. All this he did with unhurried movements of his large, strong hands, talking all the time, as if extremely anxious that Dasha should feel at home in spite of all this mess.

"Our housekeeping's not up to much, I know, but the tea and sausage are first rate, they're from Eliseyev's. There were some sweets, but they're all gone. . . . Wait a minute, though!"

Compressing his lips he glanced at Dasha, his blue eyes expressing first alarm, then resolution.

"Will you allow me?"

And he produced two paper-wrapped caramels from his waistcoat pocket.

"A man like that would never let one down," thought Dasha. Aloud, she said:

"My very favourite sweets!"

Telegin, seating himself sideways opposite Dasha, fixed a steady gaze on the mustardpot. The strain brought out a

vein on his high, broad forehead. He took out his handkerchief surreptitiously and mopped his brow.

Dasha's lips involuntarily widened in a smile; this big, handsome fellow was so lacking in self-confidence that he had to seek shelter behind the mustardpot. He probably had a mother in some country town, she told herself, a neat little old lady, who wrote him stern admonitions about his "incorrigible habit of lending money to all sorts of fools," never failing to add that "the respect of others is only earned by modesty and diligence, my son." And he, no doubt, sighed over these letters, realizing how far from perfection he was. Dasha felt drawn towards this man.

"Where do you work?" she asked.

Telegin looked up sharply, saw that she was smiling, and smiled broadly himself.

"At the Baltic Engineering Works."

"Is your work interesting?"

"It's hard to say. All work is interesting, to my mind."

"I'm sure the workers are very fond of you."

"Well, I never thought about that. I don't see why they should be, though. I'm very strict with them. Of course we get on very well—just in a comradely way."

"Tell me, do you really like what's going on in that room today?"

The lines in Ivan Ilyich's forehead smoothed themselves out, and he gave a loud laugh.

"Just kids! Awful hoodlums! But good kids! I'm very pleased with my lodgers, Darya Dmitrevna. Things sometimes go wrong at the works and I go home feeling upset, and find they've invented some fresh nonsense. It keeps me amused for the whole of the next day."

"Well, I don't like these blasphemies a bit," said Dasha sternly. "I think they're disgusting."

He looked into her eyes in astonishment.

"I don't like them a bit," she repeated.

"I'm more to blame than they are, you know," said Ivan Ilyich pensively. "I encouraged them. Of course, when you come to think of it . . . to invite people, and talk dirt the whole evening. . . . I'm sorry you've hated it so."

Dasha looked straight into his face, and smiled. She felt there was nothing she would have been afraid to say to this man, though she hardly knew him.

"I should have thought you would like something quite different, Ivan Ilyich. I'm sure you're a good man. Much better than you think you are. Ever so much!"

Dasha, her elbow on the table, her chin propped on her hand, moved her little finger over her lips. Her eyes laughed, but he thought them terrible in their overwhelming beauty—great, cool, grey eyes. In his embarrassment Ivan Ilyich bent and unbent a teaspoon between his fingers.

Much to his relief Elizaveta Kievna came into the dining room. She was wearing a Turkish shawl, and her hair was twisted into "snails" over her ears. Extending a long limp hand towards Dasha she introduced herself.

"Rastorguyeva,"\* she said, and sat down.

"We've heard a lot about you from Zhirov," she continued. "I've been studying your face the whole evening. You were shocked. That's good."

"Have some cold tea, Liza!" suggested Ivan Ilyich hastily.

"You know I never drink tea, Telegin."

She turned towards Dasha.

"You are probably wondering who this strange creature talking to you is. I'm—nobody. A nonentity. I have no talents—only vices."

Ivan Ilyich standing at the table, turned away in despair. Dasha looked down. Elizaveta Kievna smilingly observed her.

"You're smart, well off, pretty. You needn't deny it, you know it's true. You have dozens of men in love with you, of course. What a shame it all has to end in such a commonplace way! The male will appear, you'll bear him children, and at last you'll die. How dull!"

Dasha's lips trembled at the affront.

"I have no desire to be anything out of the way," she replied. "And I fail to understand why you should trouble yourself about my future."

Elizaveta Kievna's smile became broader, but her eyes remained mournful and kindly.

"I warned you I was contemptible as a human being, and revolting as a woman. Very few people can stand me, and those only out of pity, like Telegin."

"What damned nonsense you talk, Liza," muttered Telegin, not lifting his head.

\* Her surname. Kievna (daughter of Kii) is her patronymic.—*Trans.*

"I demand nothing from you, Telegin, don't be afraid!"  
She turned to Dasha again.

"Have you ever been in a hurricane? I have—once. There was a man I loved—he hated me, of course. I was living on the Black Sea at the time. There was a storm. I said to him: 'Let's go out to sea!' He went with me out of pure spite. We were carried out to the open sea. . . . That was amusing. Devilish amusing. I took off my dress, and said to him—"

"Listen, Liza," interrupted Telegin, wrinkling up his lips and nose, "you're telling lies. None of this ever happened. I know it didn't."

Elizaveta Kievna glanced at him with an enigmatic smile, and suddenly burst out laughing. She planted her elbows on the table and hid her face in her hands, her plump shoulders shaking with laughter. Dasha got up and told Telegin she wanted to go home, and would leave, if he didn't mind, without saying goodbye to anyone.

Ivan Ilyich helped her on with her coat as carefully as though it were a part of Dasha herself, and accompanied her down the dark stairs, continually lighting matches and apologizing for it being so dark, draughty and slippery. He walked with Dasha to the corner of the street, and helped her into a sleigh, driven by an old man, whose horse was flecked with snow. He stood a long time, without his hat and coat, watching the low sleigh with the girl's figure in it melt and disappear in the yellow mist. Then he went slowly home, and into the dining room. Elizaveta Kievna was sitting at the table with her face hidden in her hands, just as he had left her. Telegin scratched his chin, and said, frowning:

"Liza!"

At this, quickly—much too quickly—she raised her head.

"Liza—excuse me for saying it—but why do you always talk like that? It only makes people uncomfortable."

"You're in love," said Elizaveta Kievna softly, still gazing at him from her sad, shortsighted eyes, which looked as if they had been drawn on the surface of her face. "I can see you are! What a bore!"

"There's not a word of truth in it!" Telegin turned scarlet.  
"Not a word!"

"All right, then, I'm sorry!"

She rose lazily and went out, the ends of her dusty Turkish shawl trailing behind her over the floor.

Ivan Ilyich walked up and down thoughtfully for some time, had a drink of cold tea, and then picked up the chair Darya Dmitrevna had sat on, and carried it to his own room. There, he set it carefully in a corner, and, clapping his hand to his nose, exclaimed, as if suddenly struck by something:

"Nonsense! What rubbish!"

For Dasha the encounter had been one of many. She had met a very nice man, and that was all. Dasha was of an age when people neither see nor hear clearly. Their hearing is dulled by the pounding of the blood in their veins, and their eyes behold everywhere, as in a mirror—even in the faces of others—nothing but their own reflection. At this age the imagination is only impressed by what is abnormal—good-looking people, pretty scenery, and the unobtrusive beauties of art, are regarded by the nineteen-year-old queen as a mere part of her retinue.

Ivan Ilyich was in very different case. Now that more than a week had elapsed since Dasha's visit, he began to marvel that this girl with the tender, shell-pink complexion, in her black cloth dress, with her high-piled, ash-blond hair, and arrogant childish mouth, could have entered practically unnoticed (he had not even shaken hands with her at once), and with so little fuss—just coming in, sitting down, placing her muff on her lap. He could not understand how he had brought himself to speak to her about sausage from Eliseyev's. He had actually—brute that he was!—offered her caramels warm from his pocket.

Ivan Ilyich, who was going on for thirty, had been in love six times: while still a schoolboy in Kazan, he had fallen in love with Marusia Khvoyeva, the daughter of a veterinary surgeon, a mature virgin who had been fruitlessly trapesing the main street of the town in the same plush coat, every day at four o'clock for many years. But Marusia Khvoyeva, who was severely practical, had turned Ivan Ilyich down. Immediately after, without the slightest transitional period, he had fallen in love with Ada Tillye, that star of the theatrical world, who astonished the inhabitants of Kazan by appearing in all operettas, whatever the period, in a bathing suit, a habit which the theatre did not fail to emphasize in its posters: "The renowned Ada Tillye, awarded a gold medal for the perfection of her legs."

Ivan Ilyich actually effected an entry into the house she was staying at, and presented her with a bunch of flowers he had gathered in the municipal park. But Ada Tillye, throwing the flowers on the floor for her shaggy lap dog to sniff at, told Ivan Ilyich that her digestion had been completely ruined by the local food, and asked him to run to the chemist's for her. And that was the end of that.

Later, when a student in Petersburg, he had nearly fallen in love with Vilbushevich, a medical student, and had even kept appointments to meet her in the anatomical theatre. But this somehow came to nothing, and Vilbushevich went off to work in a Zemstvo hospital.

And then there had been Zinochka—a girl from a great milliner's shop, who had fallen desperately and tearfully in love with Ivan Ilyich. In his embarrassment and softness of heart, Ivan Ilyich had humoured her, but when she went to Moscow with a branch of the firm, he could not help heaving a sigh of relief, for her departure meant the removal of the perpetual strain of unfulfilled obligations.

His last experience of tender emotions dated from the summer of the year before last. Across the yard on which his room gave, a pale girl took to appearing at an opposite window just at sunset, opening a casement and conscientiously shaking out and brushing the same brown frock every day, after which she would put it on, and go out to sit in the park.

It was in the park that Ivan Ilyich had first spoken to her, in the stillness of dusk, and after that they had met every night, walking about, admiring the city sunset, and chatting desultorily.

The girl, Olya Komarova, worked at a notary's office; alone and sickly, she had a perpetual cough. They talked about her cough and her illness, they said how melancholy it was in the evenings for a lonely person, and she told him that Kira, a friend of hers, had fallen in love with a good man, and gone with him to the Crimea. Their talks were uninteresting. Olya Komarova had become so desperate that she would confide her most cherished thoughts to Ivan Ilyich, even admitting that sometimes she hoped he would suddenly fall in love with her, and take her to the Crimea.

But while he pitied and respected her, Ivan Ilyich could not fall in love with her, although every now and then, lying

on his sofa in the dusk after one of their talks, he would think what an egoist he was, how heartless and bad....

In the autumn Olya Komarova caught a chill and took to her bed. Ivan Ilyich drove her to the hospital, and from there followed her to the cemetery. Before her death she had asked: "If I get well, will you marry me?", "On my honour I will," Ivan Ilyich had replied.

His feeling for Dasha was unlike any of these former sentiments. Elizaveta Kievna had said: "You are in love." But one can only fall in love with what is at least theoretically accessible—one can't fall in love with a statue or a cloud.

His feeling for Dasha was of a special nature, quite new to him, and, moreover, incomprehensible, for there was so little basis for it—just a few minutes' talk, and a chair in the corner of the room.

The feeling itself was not so very acute, but Ivan Ilyich became conscious of the desire to become something special, to start being more particular about himself.

"I shall soon be thirty," he would tell himself, "and so far I've only vegetated. I've let myself go terribly! Egoism... indifference to others... I must pull myself together before it's too late."

Late in March there came one of those early spring days which burst so unexpectedly upon a town still white with snow, still muffled up against the cold. On such days, drops gleam and tinkle from eaves and cornices from the early morning, the water gurgles in the drain-pipes, the green tubs set beneath them overflow, the snow turns to slush underfoot, and steam rises from the asphalt, which is drying in patches; on such days, the heavy fur-lined coat weighs down the shoulders, and suddenly people are astonished to see some man with a Vandyke beard walking about without an overcoat, and while they are smiling after him they raise their heads and see that the blue, bottomless sky looks as if it had just been washed. And on one such day, at half past three, Ivan Ilyich came out of the engineering office on Nevsky Prospekt, unbuttoned his fur-lined coat, and screwed up his eyes in the sunlight.

"After all, it's good to be alive!"

And just then he caught sight of Dasha. She had on a blue spring coat, and was walking slowly along the curb, her left hand, in which she held a parcel, swinging; white

daisies nodded from her blue cap; her face was pensive and melancholy. Behind her was the enormous, rugged sun, the rays of which, burning with vernal intensity from the abyss of blue, were reflected in puddles, tram lines, and window-panes, falling upon the backs of the passers-by, the ground beneath their feet, and the spokes of carriage wheels.

Dasha seemed to have just emerged from all this blueness and light, only to disappear a moment later into the crowd. Ivan Ilyich gazed long after her. His heart thumped. The air was pure, spicy, intoxicating.

Ivan Ilyich walked slowly to the corner, and stood a long time, his hands folded at his back, in front of a pillar stuck all round with posters. "New and Amazing Adventures of Jack the Ripper," he read, realizing at the same time that he wasn't taking in a word, and that he had never in his life been so happy as he was now.

As he turned away from the pillar, for the second time he caught sight of Dasha. She was coming back, still keeping to the curb, the daisies still bobbing on her hat, the same parcel in her hand. He went up to her, raising his hat.

"Darya Dmitrevna, what a glorious day!"

She gave a little start. Then she raised to him somewhat austere eyes, in which the light had brought out green specks—smiled kindly, and gave him her hand in its white kid glove, with a firm, friendly gesture.

"How nice to meet you! Fancy, I thought of you today! Really-truly I did!"

Dasha nodded as she spoke, and the daisies on her hat nodded too.

"I had business on Nevsky Prospekt, Darya Dmitrevna, but now I'm free for the rest of the day. And what a day it is!"

Ivan Ilyich puckered up his lips, summoning all his presence of mind to prevent them from widening in a smile.

"Ivan Ilyich, could you see me home?" asked Dasha.

They turned into a side street, and now found themselves walking in shade.

"Ivan Ilyich, would you think it queer if I were to ask you something? No, I'm sure you wouldn't, I know I can say anything to you. Only you must answer me at once. Don't stop to think—answer straight out! Answer the moment I ask you."

Her face was troubled, the brows drawn.



"I used to think it was like this," she said, making a gesture in the air. "There were thieves, liars, murderers. . . . They all existed somewhere or other, just as snakes, spiders and mice do. But people—of course I knew they had their weaknesses and oddities—were all good and straightforward. Look at that girl coming towards us! Surely she's just what she seems to be! And the whole world seemed to me to be painted in exquisite colours. D'you know what I mean?"

"But that's splendid, Darya Dmitrevna!"

"Just a moment! And now I seem somehow to have fallen right through the picture, into a kind of stifling darkness. . . . I see that a person can be fascinating, simply adorable, you know, and at the same time be the most awful sinner. Don't think I mean stealing cakes from a counter, but real sin-lies." Dasha turned her head, her chin trembling. "That very same person can be an adulteress. A married woman. Does it mean it's right to go on like that? I'm asking you, Ivan Ilyich."

"No, no, it isn't!"

"Why not?"

"I can't tell you offhand, but I know it isn't."

"D'you think I don't feel that myself? I've been roaming about in despair since two o'clock. It's such a pure, serene day, and I keep imagining that there are evil people hiding in these houses, behind the curtains, and that I have to live among them. Do you understand me?"

"I'm afraid I don't," he said quickly.

"But I have to! Oh, how wretched I am! I'm still just a silly little girl, and this town was built for grown-ups, not for little girls."

Dasha stopped at the entrance to the house, and began pushing a cigarette box, on the lid of which was a picture of a green lady with smoke coming out of her mouth, over the pavement, with the tip of her laced boot. Ivan Ilyich, his eyes on the patent-leather tip of Dasha's boot, felt that she was going to dissolve, to disappear in a mist. He longed to hold her back, but did not know how to. The force which would have enabled him to detain her was squeezing his heart, gripping his throat. But his feelings were mere shadows on the wall for Dasha—he was only "good old Ivan Ilyich."

"Well, goodbye! And thank you so much, Ivan Ilyich! You've been a dear! I don't feel any better, but thank you

all the same. You did understand, didn't you? That's how things are! There's nothing for it but to grow up. Come and see us when you have a moment to spare—do!”

Smiling, she shook his hand, and went into the entry, where she was engulfed in darkness.

## \* VI \*

Dasha opened the door of her room, and stood still in surprise. She could smell moist flowers and the next moment her eyes fell on a basket, its high handle adorned with a blue bow, on her dressing table. She ran to bury her face in the flowers. The basket was full of Parma violets, in humid, tumbled profusion.

Dasha was quite excited. Ever since the morning she had been desiring something undefinable and now she knew that it had been violets she had been longing for. Who could have sent them? Who had been thinking of her with an intensity which had enabled him to discover wishes hidden even from herself? The bow, of course, might have been dispensed with. While untying it, Dasha said to herself:

“She's a bit restless, but she's not a bad girl, really. The rest of you can go in for all sorts of things, but she's always herself. Some people might think she turned up her nose at everything, but there are others to understand that, and even to like her for it.”

A note on thick paper—just two words “Cherish Love!” in a large, unfamiliar hand—was slipped inside the bow. On the other side were the words “Riviera Flower Shop.” So whoever it was must have written “Cherish Love!” right there, in the shop. Dasha went out into the passage holding the basket by the handle, and called out:

“Mogul! Who sent me these flowers?”

The Grand Mogul glanced at the basket and gave a virtuous sigh—such things were none of her business.

“A boy from the shop brought them to Ekaterina Dmitrevna, and the mistress told me to put them in your room.”

“Did he say who sent them?”

“He didn't say anything, only told me to give them to the mistress.”

Dasha went back to her room and stood by the window. Through the glass she could see the sunset to the left, behind the brick wall of the next-door house. It suffused the sky, melting into green, and gradually fading away. A star appeared in the greenish void, shimmering and gleaming as if it had just been polished. In the narrow, mist-filled street below, luminous globes sprang into simultaneous life along the entire length, but they were not yet bright, and shed no radiance. A motorcar hooted from somewhere quite near, and could presently be seen rolling along the street to disappear in the gathering mist of evening.

It was getting quite dark in the room, and the violets were emitting their faint fragrance. They had been sent by the person with whom Katya had committed a sin. That was obvious. Dasha stood there, thinking to herself that she had blundered like a fly into something as subtle and seductive as a spider's web. This something was in the moist smell of the flowers, in the two words, so affected, and yet so exciting: "Cherish Love!", in the springlike charm of the evening.

Suddenly her heart began to beat violently and rapidly. Dasha had a sensation of fingering, seeing, hearing, something forbidden, secret, something possessed of a searing sweetness. Without the slightest warning, with her whole heart, she let herself go. There was no knowing how it happened, but there she was—on the other side. Her austerity, her wall of ice, seemed to have dissolved into a mist like that at the end of the street, into which the motorcar, with two ladies in white hats in it, had silently disappeared.

She only knew that her heart was beating and her head was swimming, and that a joyous coldness was surging through her veins, an unbidden melody forming itself within her: "I'm alive, I'm in love! Joy, life, the whole world—all are mine, mine!"

"Listen, my dear," said Dasha aloud, opening her eyes wide, "you're simply a spinster with a beastly temper."

She crossed to the furthest corner of the room, sat down in a big, soft armchair, and began to recall the events of the last fortnight while slowly stripping the paper from a bar of chocolate.

Nothing had changed at home. Katya was, if anything, extra loving to Nikolai Ivanovich, who seemed to be in high

spirits, and was planning to build a summer cottage in Finland. Dasha alone silently felt the "tragedy" of these two blinded people. She could not bring herself to be the first to speak, and Katya, usually so sensitive to Dasha's moods, seemed to notice nothing. Ekaterina Dmitrevna ordered herself and Dasha spring costumes for Easter, spent hours at dressmakers' and milliners', took part in charity bazaars; at the request of Nikolai Ivanovich she got up a literary evening for the undeclared purpose of aiding the committee of the Left wing of the Social-Democratic Party, the so-called Bolsheviks; the Smokovnikovs now received on Thursdays as well as on Tuesdays; in a word, Katya never had a moment to spare.

"And all the time you finked, couldn't make up your mind to anything, and only speculated about things you could no more understand than a sheep could, things you never *will* understand till you get your wings singed," said Dasha to herself, laughing quietly. From the sombre lake into which icy pellets had fallen, and from which nothing good was to be expected, there emerged, as so often during the last few days, the wicked, mocking image of Bessonov. She let herself go and he took possession of her thoughts. Dasha grew very still. In the dark room the clock ticked.

Then, somewhere far away in the house, a door banged, and she could hear her sister's voice, asking:

"Has she been back long?"

Dasha rose from her chair, and went out into the hall.

"Why is your face so red?" said Ekaterina Dmitrevna quickly. Nikolai Ivanovich, taking off his overcoat, quoted a witticism of the stage lover. Dasha, darting a glance full of loathing at his thick, soft lips, followed Katya into her bedroom. There, seated at the dressing table, which had the fragile elegance of everything in her sister's room, Dasha listened to the chatter about the acquaintances they had met during their walk.

As she talked, Ekaterina Dmitrevna tidied up the drawers in her wardrobe, which were cluttered with gloves, scraps of lace, veils, satin slippers—and array of trifles smelling of the scent she used. "It appears Kerensky has again lost his case, and is penniless, I met his wife, she says things are very hard. The Timiryazevs have measles in the house. Scheinberg has gone back to that hysterical female, they say she actually

tried to shoot herself in his rooms. What a spring! And what a lovely day it's been! Everyone walking about the streets as if intoxicated. Oh, yes—here's the latest! I met Akundin, and he assured me there'll be a revolution any day now. The factories, the villages, they're all in a ferment, you know! I wish it would hurry up! Nikolai Ivanovich was so pleased, he took me to Pivato's, and we drank a whole bottle of champagne—just like that—to the Future Revolution."

Dasha listened to her sister in silence, mechanically opening and shutting the lids of various crystal flasks.

"Katya," she said abruptly, "the way I am now, you know, I'm no good to anybody."

Ekaterina Dmitrevna, her hand in a silk stocking, turned and looked attentively at her sister. "And the great thing is, I'm not any good to myself, either. I'm like a person who decides to eat nothing but raw carrots, and considers this raises him above others."

"I don't understand you," said Ekaterina Dmitrevna.

Dasha glanced at her back, and sighed.

"I think everybody's bad, I criticize everybody. This one's stupid, that one's horrid, the other one's dirty. I'm the only one who's good. I'm like a stranger here, and it makes me unhappy. I criticize you too, Katya."

"What for?" asked Ekaterina Dmitrevna quietly, without turning round.

"Oh, do try and understand me! I turn my nose up at everything, and that's my only virtue. It's simply stupid, and I'm sick of being a stranger among you all. The thing is, I must tell you, I've taken a great fancy to a certain person."

All the time she was speaking, Dasha kept her head bent; she had thrust a finger into a crystal flask, and could not get it out.

"Well, girlie, thank goodness you do like somebody. It'll make you happy. And who should be happy, if not you?"

Ekaterina Dmitrevna gave a slight sigh, as she said this.

"But Katya, it's not so simple as all that! I don't think I'm in love with him."

"If you like him, you'll get to love him."

"But you see I don't really like him."

Then Ekaterina Dmitrevna closed the wardrobe door, and stood next to Dasha.

"But you said just now you liked him. . . . What on earth. . . ."

"Don't take me up, Katya! You remember the Englishman at Sestroretsk, I liked *him*, I was even in love with him. But I was quite myself then. I was furious, I hid, I cried in the night. But this one . . . I don't even know if he's the one. . . . Oh, yes, he is, he is. . . . He's bewitched me. . . . And now I'm quite different—the whole of me. As if I'd been inhaling something. . . . If he were to come into my room I shouldn't stir. . . . He could do anything he liked."

"Dasha, don't say such things!"

Ekaterina Dmitrevna sat down beside her sister, and drew her towards herself, taking her burning hand and kissing the palm, but Dasha freed herself gently, sighed, leaned her chin on her hand, and gazed long through the window, now turning blue, at the stars.

"Dasha! What's his name?"

"Alexei Alexeyevich Bessonov."

Then Katya, her hand at her throat, moved to the chair next Dasha, and sat motionless. Dasha could not see her sister's face, which was in shadow, but she felt that she had said something terrible.

"All the better," she thought, turning aside. And this "all the better" made her feel light and hollow.

"Do tell me why other people can do anything, and I'm not to. For two years I've been hearing about endless temptations, and in all my life I've only once been kissed by a schoolboy at the skating rink."

She sighed gustily, and fell silent. Ekaterina Dmitrevna was now sitting bent forward in her chair, her hands on her knees.

"Bessonov is a very bad man," she said. "He's a terrible man, my darling. Are you listening to me?"

"Yes."

"He'll break you."

"Well, what's to be done about it, now?"

"I won't have it. Let other people. . . . But not you, not you, my darling!"

"Give a dog a bad name and hang him for it! What's so bad about Bessonov? Do tell me!"

"I can't tell you. . . . I don't know. . . . But the very thought of him makes me tremble."

"Didn't you rather like him yourself once?"

"Never! I loathe him! The Lord preserve you from him!"

"You know what, Katya! Now I'm certain to fall into his net."

"What are you talking about? We're mad, both of us!"

This was just the sort of talk Dasha loved, it was like tip-toeing across a narrow plank. She enjoyed the sight of Katya's emotion. She scarcely gave a thought to Bessonov, but purposely began talking of her feelings for him, describing meetings with him, his face. All this she exaggerated, so that it seemed as if she lay awake every night pining for Bessonov and was on the point of falling into his arms. At last she felt the absurdity of it all herself, and longed to throw her arms round Katya's neck, to kiss her, to exclaim: "If anyone's a goose, it's you, Katya!" But Ekaterina Dmitrevna suddenly slipped off her chair on to the carpet, flung her arms round her sister, and buried her face in Dasha's lap, shuddering violently, and crying out in a voice that almost terrified Dasha:

"Forgive me, Dasha, do forgive me!"

Dasha took fright. Bending over her sister, weeping herself in her terror and pity, she began to question Katya through her sobs: "What on earth d'you mean? What is there to forgive?" But Ekaterina Dmitrevna clenched her teeth, and for all reply caressed her sister, kissing her hands.

At dinner Nikolai Ivanovich, glancing from one to the other of the sisters, said:

"H'm! And am I not to be initiated into the cause of these tears?"

"The cause of these tears is my beastly mood," said Dasha hastily. "Kindly calm yourself, I know without your telling me that I'm not worth your wife's little finger."

Towards the end of dinner, when coffee was served, some guests dropped in. Nikolai Ivanovich decided that the family morale urgently demanded a visit to a restaurant. Kulichok telephoned for a car. Katya and Dasha were sent to change their clothes. Chirva arrived, and, learning they were going to a restaurant, flew into a passion, to the surprise of everyone.

"After all, what is it that suffers from this incessant carousing? Russian literature!"

But they made him go in the car with the rest.

It was crowded and noisy in the "Northern Palmyra," the huge room in the basement was flooded with the white light from crystal chandeliers. The chandeliers, the smoke, the closely set tables, the men in evening dress, the bare shoulders of the women, their coloured wigs—green, purple, grey—the snow-white ospreys, the jewels, trembling in orange, blue, and ruby rays from necks and ears, the waiters slipping past in the half-darkness, the cadaverous individual with a magic wand in his raised hands, slashing the air in front of the crimson velvet curtain, the gleam of the brass instruments, were all multiplied in mirrored walls, so that it seemed as if the whole of mankind, the whole world, were seated here in endless perspective.

Dasha, sipping champagne through a straw, observed the other tables. A clean-shaven man with powdered cheeks was seated before a sweating champagne bucket, and fragments of lobster-shell. His eyes were half-shut, his mouth contemptuously contracted. He seemed to be sitting there, and thinking to himself that the electricity would go out at last, and everybody would die, and it was scarcely worth while rejoicing about anything.

And then the curtain shook and parted. A little Japanese with tragic wrinkles leaped on to the stage, and parti-coloured balls, plates and torches began revolving in the air. Dasha thought to herself:

"Why did Katya say 'Forgive me, forgive me'?"

And all of a sudden her head seemed to be squeezed in a tight band, her heart seemed to stop. "Can it be?" She shook her head, drew a deep breath, and, not even allowing herself to wonder what she had meant by this "Can it be?", glanced at her sister.

Ekaterina Dmitrevna, at the other end of the table, looked so weary, so sad, and so beautiful, that Dasha's eyes filled with tears. She lifted her finger to her lips, and blew imperceptibly upon it. It was one of their signals. Katya saw it, understood, and gave a slow, tender smile.

About two o'clock, an argument arose as to where they should go next. Ekaterina Dmitrevna begged to be allowed to go home. Nikolai Ivanovich said he would do what everyone else did, and "everyone else" decided to go on somewhere else.



Then it was that Dasha caught sight of Bessonov in the thinning crowd. He was seated with his elbow thrust far across the table, listening attentively to Akundin, who was telling him something with a half-chewed cigarette between his lips, at the same time energetically drawing with his fingernail on the tablecloth. And Bessonov was staring at this flying fingernail. His face was pale, and he looked absorbed. It seemed to Dasha that she could even make out through the general din the words: "An end, an end to everything!" But almost immediately the two men were shut out of view by a Tatar waiter with an enormous paunch. Katya and Nikolai Ivanovich got up, calling to Dasha, and she had to leave, her curiosity and excitement unsatisfied.

Out in the street the bracing fragrance of the frost came as a surprise. The stars swam in the black and purple sky. Somebody behind Dasha said, with a laugh: "A devilish fine night!" The car drew up to the kerb, a ragged individual emerged from among the fumes of petrol, snatching off his cap, and, with a dancing motion, opened the door for Dasha. Stepping in, Dasha looked round—the man, thin, stubble-chinned, wry-mouthed, was shaking all over, his elbows pressed to his sides.

"Congratulations on a successful evening at the shrine of luxury and sensuality!"

His voice was blithe and husky, and he caught the coin thrown to him by one of the party deftly, touching his tattered cap in a salute. Dasha felt as if her whole being was rasped by his fierce black eyes.

They arrived home late. Dasha, lying on her back in bed, fell into a trancelike sleep, her whole being numb with exhaustion. And suddenly, pushing aside the blankets with a groan, she sat bolt upright, opening her eyes. The sun was streaming on to the parquet floor through the window. . . . "Oh, God, what was that horror!" It had been so terrible that she could scarcely keep back her tears, but when she pulled herself together, it appeared she had forgotten it all. Nothing remained but a pain at her heart, the aftermath of some ghastly dream.

After breakfast, Dasha went to the college, had herself entered for the examinations, bought some books, and led quite an austere, working life till dinner time. But in the evening she had to put on silk stockings again (in the morn-

ing she had made a resolution to wear only cotton ones), to powder her arms and shoulders, to do her hair. "I wish I could just twist it into a bun on my neck, but they all yell at me to have a fashionable hair-do—and how can I, when my hair's so fluffy!" In a word, all was fuss and trouble. And there was a champagne stain on the front of her new blue silk dress.

Dasha suddenly felt so sad about this dress, and about her own wasted life, that she sat down and had a good cry with the ruined skirt in her hand. Nikolai Ivanovich was just coming in at the door, but seeing Dasha sitting crying in her underclothes, he called for his wife. Katya came running up, seized the dress, exclaimed: "Oh, that'll come out a minute!" and called the Grand Mogul, who appeared with benzine and hot water.

The dress was cleaned, and Dasha attired in it, Nikolai Ivanovich fuming in the hall. "Don't you realize, it's a first night, good people, we mustn't be late!" And of course they were late.

Dasha, seated beside Ekaterina Dmitrevna in the box, watched a sturdy fellow with a false beard and unnaturally wide-open eyes, standing beneath a flat tree. "I love you, I love you," he was saying to a girl in bright pink, whose hand he was holding. And though the play was not a sad one, Dasha felt inclined to cry all the time and to pity the girl in bright pink, and was quite vexed that the act did not end sadly. The girl, it appeared, both loved him, and did not love him, responded to his embraces with pixy laughter, and ran off to the villain, whose white trousers gleamed in the background. The hero clutched at his forehead, swore he would destroy some manuscript or other—his lifework—and the first act was over.

Acquaintances appeared in the box, and the usual rapid, animated conversation began.

Little Scheinberg, whose bare cranium and wizened, clean-shaven face seemed always to be jumping out of his stiff collar, said the play was gripping.

"The sex problem again, but vividly presented. Humanity simply must put an end to this accursed problem."

Burov, the tall, sombre, examining magistrate, a liberal whose wife had run away at Christmas with the owner of a racing stable, replied to this:

"I don't know about other people, but for me the problem is solved. Women are inherently liars, men lie by the aid of art. The sex question is just filth, and art is a form of criminal offence."

Nikolai Ivanovich burst out laughing and glanced at his wife. Burov continued moodily:

"When the time comes for the bird to lay an egg, the male flaunts a brightly coloured tail. This is a lie, since his natural tail is grey and not coloured. A blossom opens on a bough, and that's a lie, a bait, the real truth lies in the ugly roots underground. But the worst liar of all is man. He puts forth no blossoms, he has no tail, so he uses his tongue; it is arrant, detestable lying, this so-called love, and all the fuss made about it. All this is only mysterious to very young girls." (He glanced obliquely at Dasha.) "But in our benighted times serious people take an interest in such rubbish. Ye-es, the Russian State is suffering from congestion of the bowels."

Pulling a wry face, he bent over a box of sweets, poking them about with his finger, but finding none to his taste, raised to his eyes the naval binocular hanging on a strap over his shoulder.

The talk turned on the stagnation in politics, and on reaction. Kulichok conveyed the latest Court gossip in an excited whisper.

"Appalling! Appalling!" muttered Scheinberg. Nikolai Ivanovich smote his knee.

"Revolution, gentlemen," he said. "We need a revolution urgently. Otherwise we shall simply perish. I have information,"—he lowered his voice—"that there is great unrest in the factories."

In his excitement Scheinberg flung out the fingers of both hands.

"But when, when? We can't wait for ever."

"We'll live to see it, Yakov Alexandrovich," said Nikolai Ivanovich gaily. "We'll live to see it. And we'll make you Minister of Justice, Your Excellency."

Dasha was sick of hearing about these problems, revolutions, and ministerial posts. Leaning her elbow on the velvet-covered ledge of the box, and clasping Katya round the waist with the other arm, she let her glance roam over the stalls, every now and then exchanging smiling bows with acquaint-

ances. Dasha was well aware that she and her sister were attractive, and surprised glances from the crowd—admiring ones from the men, spiteful ones from the women—fragments of conversation, smiles, went to her head, like the spring air. Her lachrymose mood had passed. A tendril of Katya's hair tickled her cheek just next to the ear.

"I do love you, Katya!" she said in a whisper.

"And I love you!"

"Are you glad I live with you?"

"Awfully!"

Dasha tried to think of some more nice things to say to Katya. And suddenly she caught sight of Telegin down below. He stood there in a black coat, a cap and a theatre bill in his hands, and had long been looking at the Smokovnikovs' box, but without lifting his head, so that no one should notice it. His strong, tanned face was conspicuous among the other faces, all either pallid or drink-sodden. His hair was much lighter than Dasha had remembered it—it was the colour of rye.

Meeting Dasha's eyes, he immediately bowed, and turned away, but his cap fell out of his hands. Bending down, he knocked against a stout lady in the stalls, began apologizing, blushed, backed, and stepped on the toe of the editor of *The Chorus of the Muses*, an aesthetic journal. Dasha said to her sister:

"Look, Katya—that's Telegin."

"He looks very nice."

"He's such a darling I could kiss him! And, Katya, you don't know how clever he is!"

"Well, then, Dasha. . . ."

"What?"

But her sister fell silent. Dasha understood, and fell silent herself. Again she felt a pang at her heart—all was not well within, inside the snail's shell. She had had a moment of oblivion, but when she looked into herself again, all was darkness and confusion.

When the lights went down, and the curtain sailed apart, Dasha sighed, broke off a bit of chocolate, popped it into her mouth, and began to follow what was going on on the stage.

The man with the false beard was still threatening to burn his manuscript, the girl, seated at a grand piano, was making fun of him. And it was perfectly obvious that this girl

ought to have been married out of hand, and that all these subtleties need not have been dragged out for three acts.

Dasha raised her eyes to the ceiling, where a beautiful, half-naked woman with a pure, joyous smile soared amidst clouds. "Why, she's just like me!" thought Dasha. She began immediately seeing herself as she imagined others saw her: a being seated in a box, munching chocolate, lying, making a mess of things, and waiting for something extraordinary to happen. But nothing happened. "There'll be no rest for me till I go to him, till I hear his voice, feel his essence. Everything else is lies. One must be honest."

From this evening Dasha's mind was made up. She knew now that she would go to Bessonov, and dreaded the moment. At one time she had thought of going to her father in Samara, but gave up the idea, realizing that a thousand miles or so would not deliver her from temptation.

Her healthy virginity was up in arms, but what could she do against the "other being," when everything was on its side. Besides, it was intolerably humiliating to think and suffer so long about this Bessonov, who never thought of her, and lived in perfect content somewhere near Kamenno-Ostrov Avenue, writing poetry about an actress with lace petticoats. But he had got into Dasha's very blood, her whole being was saturated with him.

Dasha now began deliberately smoothing back her hair, screwing it into a bun at the back of her head; she wore her old school clothes, brought with her from Samara, forced herself to cram up Roman Law, did not put in an appearance when there were visitors, and would take no part in entertainments. It was no easy task to be honest. Dasha was afraid—simply afraid.

One cool evening early in April, when the colours of the sunset had died down and the faded, greenish sky was lit up by a phosphorescent light which cast no shadows, Dasha returned home on foot from the islands.

She had told them at home that she was going to the college, but really she had taken the tram to Elagin Bridge, and roamed the bare alleys the whole evening, crossing bridges, gazing at the water, at the purple twigs etched against the orange sunset, at the faces of the passers-by, at the lights of carriages gleaming between the rows of moss-grown tree trunks. Her mind was vacant, and she did not hurry.

She felt perfectly calm, her whole being steeped in the salty spring air wafted from the coast. Her feet were tired, but she was reluctant to go home. Carriages bowled down the broad expanse of Kameno-Ostrov Avenue, long motor-cars sped by, groups of pedestrians passed, joking and laughing. Dasha turned into a side street.

Here all was quiet and solitude. The sky was green behind the roofs. Music streamed out from between the drawn window curtains. In one house somebody was learning a sonata, from another came a maddeningly familiar waltz, and from an attic window dimly reddened by the sunset came the strains of a violin.

The heart of Dasha, too, penetrated by all these sounds, was full of a wistful music. Her body seemed to have become light and pure.

She turned the corner, noted the number on the wall of a house, and smiled; then, approaching the front door on which, above a brass lion's head was a visiting card with "A. Bessonov" engraved on it, she rang the bell violently.

## \* VII \*

The night before, the hall porter of the "Vienna" restaurant, helping Bessonov off with his coat, had said significantly:

"There's somebody waiting for you, Alexei Alexeyevich."

"Who?"

"A young person."

"But who is she?"

"We have never seen her here before."

Bessonov, staring unseeingly above the heads of the diners, made for the farthest corner of the crowded restaurant. Loskutkin, the head waiter, his grey whiskers drooping over Bessonov's shoulder, recommended the saddle of mutton as being very choice.

"I don't want to eat," said Bessonov. "Give me some white wine—my brand."

He sat severely erect, his hands on the tablecloth, enveloped by the mood of sombre inspiration habitual to him at this hour and in this place. All the impressions of the day became fused in a harmonious and intelligible form, and the shadow of this externally-evoked form arose within his

soul, stirred as it was by the wailing of Rumanian violins, the fragrance of scent, the closeness of the crowded restaurant. This shadow was inspiration. He felt as if he could, by some inner sense of touch, attain the secret meaning of things and of words.

Bessonov raised his glass and sipped his wine. His heart beat slowly. It was inexpressibly pleasant to feel his whole being penetrated by sounds and voices.

Opposite, at a table placed in front of a mirror, Sapozhkov, Antoshka Arnoldov, and Elizaveta Kievna were having supper. The day before, Elizaveta Kievna had written Bessonov a long letter making an assignment with him, and now she was sitting at the table, flushed and excited. She wore a dress with black and yellow stripes, and a bow of the same stuff in her hair. When Bessonov entered she felt suffocated.

"Take care!" Arnoldov whispered to her, showing all his teeth at once, the decayed and the gold ones. "He's just thrown over an actress, he has no woman now, and he's as dangerous as a tiger."

Elizaveta Kievna laughed, making her stripy bow quiver, and threaded her way among the tables to Bessonov. People turned to look at her, grinning.

Of late, Elizaveta Kievna's life had become unutterably dreary, day succeeding day with nothing to do, with no hope of anything better—in short, she was bored to death. Telegin seemed to have taken a dislike to her and, while perfectly polite, avoided talking to her, or being alone with her, whereas she felt desperately that he was the man she needed. When his voice sounded in the hall, she would stare fixedly at the door. He would go along the passage on tiptoe as usual. She would wait, her heart missing a beat, the door would seem to swim before her eyes, but once more he would pass on. If only he would knock, ask for a match....

A day or two before, to spite Zhirov, who, wary as a cat, criticized everything, she had bought one of Bessonov's books, and, cutting the pages with her curling tongs, had read it straight through several times, spilt coffee over it, crumpled its pages while reading in bed, and finally, one day at dinner, had announced that he was a genius. Telegin's boarders were indignant. Sapozhkov called Bessonov a fungus sponging on the decaying body of the bourgeoisie. A vein swelled on Zhirov's temple. The artist Valet broke

a plate. Only Telegin remained unmoved. Then Elizaveta Kievna had been overcome by one of her so-called "impulses to self-provocation." Shrieking with laughter, she had gone to her room, written Bessonov an absurd, enthusiastic letter demanding a rendezvous, and returned to the dining room, where she silently threw the letter on the table. The boarders read it aloud, and discussed it a long time. Telegin said:

"A very daring letter."

She had then given the letter to the cook, to be posted immediately, after which she felt she was rushing headlong down an abyss.

And now, coming up to Bessonov, Elizaveta Kievna said bravely:

"I wrote to you. You came. Thanks."

She sat down opposite him, sideways, her knees crossed, her elbow on the tablecloth, her chin on her hand, and began gazing at Alexei Alexeyevich from her extraordinary eyes. He said nothing. The waiter placed another glass on the table, and poured some wine into it for Elizaveta Kievna. She said:

"You will ask, of course, why I wanted to see you."

"No, I shan't. Drink your wine."

"You are right, I have nothing to say. You live, Bessonov, and I don't. I'm simply-bored."

"What do you do?"

"Nothing!" She laughed, and suddenly her face was suffused with colour. "I might become a cocotte, but that's dull. I don't do anything. I'm waiting for the trumpets to blow, and the fire. . . . Does it seem strange to you?"

"Who are you?"

She did not answer, but lowered her head, and blushed still more furiously.

"I'm a phantom," she whispered.

Bessonov smiled sourly. "She's a fool!" he thought. But the parting in her fair hair was so sweetly virginal, her bare plump shoulders looked so innocent, that Bessonov smiled more kindly, sipped the whole glass of wine through his teeth, and suddenly felt a desire to blow the black smoke of his imagination over this naive girl. He told her that night was descending on Russia, for the accomplishment of a terrible retribution. This had been made known to him by certain mysterious and ominous portents.



"You've seen the poster stuck all over the town—a grinning imp bouncing down a gigantic staircase on a rubber tire . . . d'you understand the meaning of it?"

Elizaveta Kievna looked into his ice-cold eyes, noted his feminine mouth, his fine-drawn arched brows, the slight trembling of his fingers as he held his glass, and the slow, avid way in which he drank. Her head was going round pleasantly. Sapozhkov was making signs to her from where he sat. Suddenly Bessonov turned in his seat, and said, frowning:

"Who are those people?"

"They're my friends."

"I don't like the way they signal to you."

Then, scarcely realizing what she was saying, Elizaveta Kievna blurted out:

"We can go somewhere else if you like."

Bessonov looked at her steadily. She had a slight cast in one eye, there was a faint smile on her lips, and on her temples were beads of sweat. And suddenly he felt a craving for this healthy, shortsighted girl, and said, taking her large, hot hand as it lay on the table:

"Either go away this very moment, or hold your tongue. Come on! You know you'll have to."

Elizaveta Kievna gave a short sigh and turned pale. She never knew how she got up and took Bessonov's arm, or how they made their way between the tables. And when they were seated in a droshky, the wind brought no coolness to her burning skin.

The wheels clattered over the stones. Bessonov sat with his chin on his hands, which were clasped over the knob of his stick:

"I'm only thirty-five," he said, "but my life is over. I can no longer be taken in by love. What could be sadder than suddenly to discover that the knight's charger is only a wooden hobbyhorse! And what a long, long time one must drag this life about, like a corpse. . . ."

He turned to her, his lips curved in a smile.

"I suppose I shall have to wait, like you, for the trumpets of Jericho to blow. Wouldn't it be nice if they suddenly sounded over this cemetery! Just a few notes, and the sky would be ablaze! You're probably right. . . ."

They arrived at an out-of-town hotel. The sleepy waiter led them through a long corridor to the only room not yet taken,

a low chamber with crimson wallpaper, torn and spotted. A great bed with a faded canopy stood against one wall, a tin washstand at its foot. It was damp and unaired, and smelt of stale tobacco. Elizaveta Kievna, standing in the doorway, said in a voice which was almost inaudible:

"Why have you brought me here?"

"Don't worry—we'll be all right here," said Bessonov hastily.

He took off her coat and hat, and placed them on a broken-down armchair. The waiter brought a bottle of champagne, some small apples, and a bunch of grapes with the sawdust still clinging to them, glanced into the washbasin, and departed, unalterably glum.

Elizaveta Kievna drew the window curtain back—a gas lamp stood in the midst of a damp expanse of wasteland, and huge tubs were being driven past by men huddled beneath sacking. Smiling bitterly, she crossed to the mirror, and began arranging her hair with gestures that felt unfamiliar to herself. "When I come to my senses tomorrow, I shall go mad," she thought calmly, and fixed the bow of stripy ribbon.

"Want some wine?" asked Bessonov.

"Yes, please!"

She seated herself on the sofa, and he sank down at her feet on the carpet, saying meditatively:

"Your eyes terrify me—they're wild and gentle. Russian eyes. Do you love me?"

This set her in a turmoil again, but the next moment she told herself: "Why, this *is* madness!"

She took the glass, brimming with wine, from his hand, and drank it off, and immediately everything seemed to be going slowly round, as if she were falling.

"I'm afraid of you, and I shall hate you, I suppose," she said, noticing that the words—her own and yet not her own—seemed to come from a great distance.

"Don't look at me like that," she said. "You make me feel ashamed."

"You're a strange girl."

"Bessonov, you're a very dangerous man. I'm from an Old-Believer family, I believe in the devil. . . . For God's sake, don't look at me like that! I know what you need me for . . . I'm afraid of you."

She laughed loudly, her whole body shaking with her

laughter, so that the wine in her glass spilled. Bessonov put his face in her lap.

"Love me, love me, I implore you," he exclaimed in a desperate voice, as if in her alone he saw his salvation. "I'm so unhappy. . . . I'm so afraid . . . I'm afraid of being alone. . . . Love me, love me!"

Elizaveta Kievna put her hand on his head, and closed her eyes.

He told her that the fear of death came over him every night. He had to feel a living being close to him, one who would pity him, warm him, give herself to him.

"I know, it's hell . . . but I'm quite numb. My heart has stopped. Warm me. It's so little to ask. Pity me, I'm dying. Don't leave me by myself. Sweet, sweet girl. . . ."

Terrified and excited, Elizaveta Kievna uttered no word. Bessonov showered ever more lingering kisses on the palms of her hands. Then he fell to kissing her big, sturdy legs. She closed her eyes still more tightly, and thought her heart would stop beating from very shame.

And suddenly she felt as if she were enveloped in flames. Bessonov seemed so winning and pathetic . . . she lifted his head and kissed him firmly, hungrily on the lips. After this she undressed without the slightest feeling of shame, and got into bed.

When Bessonov fell asleep, his head on her bare shoulder, Elizaveta Kievna gazed long from her shortsighted eyes at the sallow face, with the lines of fatigue at the temples, beneath the eyelids, beside the tightly-closed lips—the strange face become eternally familiar.

It made her so sad to watch the sleeper, that Elizaveta Kievna wept.

She told herself that Bessonov, waking up and seeing her in bed beside him—fat, ugly, with swollen eyelids—would instantly throw her over; that nobody could ever love her, that everybody would think her a depraved, foolish, vulgar woman, and she would purposely do everything to make them think so; that she loved one man, and had given herself to another, and her whole life would be nothing but dregs and rubbish and appalling insults. Elizaveta Kievna, giving way to suppressed sobbing, wiped her eyes on the corner of the sheet. And gradually, still crying, she found the oblivion of sleep.

Bessonov inhaled a deep draught of air through his nostrils, rolled over on his back, and opened his eyes. His whole body was racked with the unutterable melancholy which follows on carousals. The thought that he would have to begin another day was loathsome to him. He gazed long at one of the brass knobs on the bedstead, then, bracing himself, glanced to his side. Beside him, also on her back, lay a woman, her face hidden in the crook of her bare arm.

"Who could it be?"

He cudgelled his tortured brains, but unable to remember anything whatsoever, fumbled cautiously beneath the pillow for his cigarette case, and lit a cigarette.

"Can't remember, damn it! Deuced awkward!"

"I see you're awake," he began in wheedling tones. "Good morning!"

She neither spoke, nor removed her arm from her face, but he persevered.

"Yesterday we were strangers, and today we are united by the mysterious bonds of the night spent together."

He frowned—it all sounded so banal. And who could say what she would do next—repent, cry, or cling to him in an access of love? He touched her elbow cautiously, drawing back immediately. Her name *was* Margarita, wasn't it?

"Margarita, are you angry with me?" he asked mournfully.

Then she sat up among the pillows, and, holding her slipping chemise over her breast, surveyed him from prominent, shortsighted eyes. Her eyelids were swollen, and a bitter smile flickered over her thick lips. Everything came back to him, and he experienced a feeling of fraternal tenderness.

"My name's not Margarita, it's Elizaveta Kievna," she said. "I hate you. Get out of this bed!"

Bessonov instantly got out of bed, and dressed himself as well as he could behind the hangings of the bed, next to the foul-smelling washstand. When he was dressed, he drew up the blind, and put out the electric light.

"There are moments one can never forget," he muttered.

Elizaveta Kievna watched him all the time with a darkening gaze. When he sat down on the sofa to finish his cigarette, she said slowly:

"I'll poison myself when I get home."

"I don't understand your mood, Elizaveta Kievna."

"Then don't! Get out of the room, I want to dress."

Bessonov went into the corridor, which was draughty and smelt of coal gas. She kept him waiting a long time. He sat on the window sill and smoked, then he went to the very end of the corridor, from where he could hear the waiter and two chambermaids talking in undertones in the little kitchen, over their glasses of tea.

"We've heard enough about your village!" the waiter was saying. "Russia, indeed! A fat lot you understand! Just you go round the bedrooms any night—there's Russia for you! Swines, all of them! Swines and blackguards, that's what they are!"

"Mind what you say, Kuzma Ivanovich!"

"After working here eighteen years, I can say what I like."

Bessonov went back. The door was open, the room empty. His hat lay on the floor.

"So much the better!" he thought, yawning and stretching his limbs.

Thus began another day. Since the morning a strong wind had been dispersing yesterday's rain clouds and driving them northwards, where they piled up in vast white mounds. The drenched town was bathed in sunlight. In its rays all sorts of gelatinous monsters, invisible to the eye—colds, coughs, diseases, the melancholy consumptive bacilli—were shrivelled up, scorched and stunned; even the semimystical microbes of black neurasthenia retreated into the folds of curtains in darkened rooms and damp basements. The wind scoured the streets. Windows were being cleaned and opened in the houses. Yardmen in blue blouses were sweeping the roads. In Nevsky Prospekt, depraved-looking little girls with pinched sallow faces, offered the passers-by bunches of snowdrops scented with cheap eau de Cologne. Everything reminiscent of winter was hurriedly removed from the shop windows, and wares as gay and springlike as the first flowers, placed in their stead.

The afternoon papers came out with the headline: "Hail to the Russian Spring!" There were even a few extremely ambiguous poems. In a word, the censor had been hood-winked.

As a crowning touch, the futurists from the "Centre" walked through the streets, followed by the whistling and hooting of boys. There were three of them—Zhironov, the artist

Valet, and the then unknown Arkadi Semisvetov, an immensely tall young fellow with an equine countenance.

The futurists wore top hats and short, unbelted blouses of orange velvet, adorned with black zigzags. Each sported a monocle, and had a fish, an arrow, and the letter "R" painted on one cheek. Towards five o'clock they were arrested by the district inspector of police, and taken in a droshky to the police station for identification.

Everybody seemed to be out in the streets. Brilliant carriages and streams of pedestrians moved along Morskaya Street, the embankment, and Kameno-Ostrov Avenue. There were many, surprisingly many, who felt that something remarkable was bound to happen this very day; some manifesto would be signed in the Winter Palace, the Council of Ministers would be blown up by a bomb, something, somewhere, would surely "begin."

But the blue dusk descended upon the town, the lamps were lit along streets and canal banks, their rays reflected in shimmering lines on the dark waters, and from the Neva bridges could be seen, behind the smoke stacks of the ship-building yards, a vast sunset, mingled with smoke, barred with clouds. And nothing had happened. The last gleam flashed from the spire of the Peter-Paul fortress, and the day was over.

Bessonov had worked a great deal that day, and worked well. Having indulged in a refreshing after-breakfast nap he read Goethe for a long time, and his reading excited and stimulated him.

He paced up and down beside his bookcases, thinking aloud, and going every now and then to his desk to write down words and lines. The old nurse who looked after his bachelor apartment brought in the china coffeepot, full of steaming mocha coffee.

Bessonov was elated. "Night is descending upon Russia," he wrote, "the curtain is rising upon the final tragedy, the God-fearing people, assuming a terrible mask, will be gloriously transformed like the Cossack in Gogol's *Terrible Revenge* into the fighters against God. A nation-wide celebration of the Black Mass is being prepared. The abyss is opened. There is no escape." He closed his eyes, and pictured to himself deserted fields, crosses stuck in mounds, roofs blown off by the wind, and far away, beyond the

hills, the glow of fires. Clasp ing his head in his hands he told himself that it was like this that he loved to think of his country—the country known to him only through books and pictures. His forehead creased into deep wrinkles, his heart was plunged in appalling forebodings. Then, his smoking cigarette between his fingers, he covered sheet after sheet of rustling paper with his bold handwriting. When dusk fell, Bessonov, without turning on the light, lay down on the sofa, still excited, his head burning, his hands moist. His working day had come to an end.

Gradually his heart began to beat more evenly and calmly. Now it had become a matter of deciding how to spend the evening and the night. . . . No one had rung him up, or come to see him. He would have to cope with the demon of depression by himself. The sound of a piano came from the apartment of the English family overhead, arousing vague, impossible desires.

Suddenly the quiet of the house was broken by the sound of the front-door bell. The old servant shuffled by in her soft slippers. A haughty feminine voice could be heard, saying: "I wish to see him!"

Then light impetuous footsteps halted at the door. Bessonov stayed where he was, smiling. The door opened noiselessly, and a graceful, slight girl, in a big hat with daisies erect on its brim, entered the room, her figure luminous in the rays of the hall lamp. Coming in from the lighted hall she stood a moment as if dazzled, in the middle of the room. On Bessonov's rising silently from the sofa, she made as if to retreat, but instead tossed her head resolutely and said, in the same high voice:

"I've come to see you on a very important matter."

Bessonov went to his desk and switched on the lamp. Its blue shade shone out amidst the books and papers, filling the room with a tranquil twilight.

"What can I do for you?" asked Alexei Alexeyevich. He offered his visitor a seat and let himself quietly down into the chair at his desk, leaning on the arm rest. His face was a transparent white, with blue shadows under the lids. He raised his eyes slowly to his visitor, but started on recognizing her, his hands shaking.

"Darya Dmitrevna!" he said softly. "I didn't know you just at first."

Dasha seated herself in a chair with the same air of resolution with which she had entered, folded her gloved hands on her knees, and frowned.

"Darya Dmitrevna, I'm delighted to see you in my house. This is a beautiful present you have given me."

Paying no heed to his words, Dasha said:

"Please don't think I'm one of your admirers. I like some of your poems, and I don't like others—I don't understand them, I just don't like them. I haven't come here to talk about poetry. I've come because you don't give me a moment's rest."

She bent her head low, and Bessonov saw that her neck, and her wrists between the glove and the sleeve of her black dress were suffused with colour. He neither spoke, nor moved.

"I'm nothing to you of course. I only wish I could feel the same indifference. But there it is, you see . . . unpleasant moments are not to be avoided. . . ."

She raised her head with a rapid movement, and from her stern, clear eyes looked into his. Bessonov slowly lowered his eyelids.

"You have got into my blood . . . like a disease. I keep catching myself thinking about you. I can't stand it any longer. The best thing seemed to be to go and tell you frankly. I made up my mind today. And here I am, making a declaration of love."

Her lips trembled. She turned aside hastily, and began examining the wall, against which, illuminated from below, hung the mask of Peter the Great, with tightly shut, leering mouth and closed lids, then so popular among the poets. The family of the English clergyman upstairs were singing a four-part fugue: "We will die! Nay, we will fly! Up to the crystal sky! To endless, endless bliss!"

"If you attempt to tell me that you feel the same way about me, I shall go away this minute!" said Dasha with passionate haste. "Of course it's obvious you can never even respect me. Decent women don't do these things. But I want nothing, and ask nothing of you. I just had to tell you that I love you desperately, violently. . . . It's made me all go to pieces. . . . Even my pride has gone. . . ."

To herself she thought: "Now get up. Make a dignified bow, and go." But she sat on, staring at the leering mask.



She felt so weak that she could hardly raise her hand, and now she was aware of her whole body, of its weight and warmth. "Why doesn't he answer?" she asked herself, as in a dream. Bessonov, covering his face with the palm of his hand, began to speak in a low muffled voice, as people do in church.

"I can only thank you for your feeling with my whole soul. Such moments, such fragrance as you have brought me can never be forgotten. . . ."

"You are not called upon to remember them," said Dasha through clenched teeth.

Bessonov fell silent, rose from his chair, and moving away went to lean his back against the bookcase.

"Darya Dmitrevna, I can only bow low before you. I am not worthy to listen to you. Perhaps never before have I cursed myself as I do at this moment. I have wasted myself, squandered my substance. There's nothing left of me. How shall I answer you? Shall I invite you to go to the country with me, to a hotel? Darya Dmitrevna, I will be honest with you. I can no longer love. A few years ago I would have thought I still had an eternity of youth to spend. I would not have let you go."

Dasha felt as if he were sticking needles into her. His words were a slow torture. . . .

"Now I can only spill the precious wine. You must try and understand what this costs me. To extend one's hand, to grasp. . . ."

"No, no," whispered Dasha hastily.

"But yes. And you know it yourself. There is no sweeter sin than to squander what is precious. To spill the wine. That's what you came to me for. To spill out the goblet of your virgin wine. . . . You have brought it to me."

His eyes slowly narrowed. Dasha, holding her breath, looked with horror into his face.

"Darya Dmitrevna, I'll be frank with you. You're so like your sister that just at first. . . ."

"What!" cried Dasha. "What's that you said?"

She leaped from the armchair and stood in front of him. Bessonov, who did not understand what had happened, misinterpreted her excitement. He felt that he was beginning to lose his head. The fragrance of her scent, and the perfume of a woman's skin, all but imperceptible, yet overwhelming,

and different in every individual, were stealing into his nostrils.

"It's madness . . . I know . . . I can't help it . . ." he whispered, feeling blindly for her hand.

But Dasha started away at a run. At the door, she glanced back with wild eyes, and disappeared. The front door banged loudly. Bessonov went slowly to the desk, and took out a cigarette, his fingernails knocking against the crystal box. Then he pressed the palm of his hand against his eyes, the terrific force of his imagination assuring him that the White Order, preparing for the decisive battle, had sent him this passionate, delicate, seductive maiden, to attract, to convert, and to save him. But he was already hopelessly in the hands of the Black Order, and there was no longer any salvation for him. He was ravished by unquenchable longings and regrets, coursing through his blood like a slow poison.

## \* VIII \*

"Is that you, Dasha? Come in!"

Ekaterina Dmitrevna was standing before her wardrobe mirror lacing up her stays. She smiled absently at Dasha, and went on twisting and turning, dancing up and down on the carpet in her tight slippers. She had on light underwear, all ribbon and lace, her beautiful arms and shoulders were powdered, and her hair was piled up in a luxuriant crown on the top of her head. On a low table nearby stood a cup of hot water; nail scissors, files, lipsticks and powder puffs were scattered in profusion. There were no engagements for the evening, and Ekaterina Dmitrevna was "preening her feathers," as her family called it.

"Fancy," she said, fastening her stockings, "they're not wearing stays with straight busks any more. Look, this is quite new, from Madame Duclet's. The tummy's ever so much freer, and the weeniest bit accentuated. D'you like it?"

"No, I don't," said Dasha.

She stayed near the door, her hands folded behind her back. Ekaterina Dmitrevna raised her eyebrows in astonishment.

"Don't you really? What a pity! They're so comfortable!"

"What's so comfortable, Katya?"

"Perhaps you don't like the lace on them? It could be changed. Still it's funny—why don't you like them?"

Once more she began her twisting and turning before the mirror.

"Please don't ask *me* how I like your stays!"

"Well, Nikolai Ivanovich doesn't understand a thing about such matters."

"It's nothing to do with Nikolai Ivanovich, either."

"What's the matter, Dasha?"

Ekaterina Dmitrevna opened her mouth in astonishment. It was only now that she noticed that Dasha was fairly bursting with suppressed emotion, that she was speaking through clenched teeth, and that there were burning patches on her cheeks.

"I think it would be as well if you were to give up postulating in front of the glass, Katya."

"I've got to make myself decent, haven't I?"

"For whose benefit?"

"Whatever is the matter with you? For my own, of course!"

"That's a lie!"

After this the sisters said nothing for a long time. Ekaterina Dmitrevna picked up the camel-hair dressing gown with a blue silk lining, hanging over the back of her chair, and put it on, slowly knotting the girdle. Following her movements attentively, Dasha brought out the words:

"Go to Nikolai Ivanovich, and make a clean breast of it."

Ekaterina Dmitrevna stood there, fingering her girdle. A lump kept rising in her throat, as if she had swallowed something hard.

"Dasha, have you found something out?" she asked softly.

"I've just come from Bessonov." (Ekaterina Dmitrevna stared in front of her with unseeing eyes and suddenly went deathly pale. Her shoulder twitched.) "You needn't worry—nothing happened to me there. He told me just in time. . . ."

Dasha shifted from one foot to the other.

"I guessed long ago that you . . . that it was him . . . . Only it was all too beastly to believe. . . . You funkyed and lied. But I tell you, I don't intend to go on living in such filth. . . . Go to your husband and tell him everything."

Dasha could not go on; her sister stood before her, her head bent low. Dasha had expected anything but this meekly, guiltily bent head.

"Am I to go to him now?" asked Katya.

"Yes, this very minute. You ought to understand, yourself."

Ekaterina Dmitrevna drew a short sigh and went to the door. Then, hesitating a little, she said: "I can't, Dasha."

Dasha made no reply.

"All right, I'll go and tell him," said Katya.

Nikolai Ivanovich was sitting in the drawing room, scratching at his beard with an ivory paper knife, and reading Akundin's article in the latest number of *The Russian Review*.

It was an article on the anniversary of Bakunin's death, and Nikolai Ivanovich was thoroughly enjoying himself. When his wife came in he called out to her:

"Sit down, Katya. Listen to this ... here it is.... 'The charm of this man' (he means Bakunin\*) 'lies not so much in his mode of thought and his unceasing devotion to his cause, as in the spirit in which he put his ideas into practice, the spirit which permeates everything he did—the night-long discussions with Proudhon,\*\* the courage with which he flung himself into the very midst of the battle, and even the romantic gesture with which he, a mere onlooker, directed the fires of the Austrian insurgents, not knowing rightly against whom and for what they were fighting. The spirit of Bakunin is the symbol of that mighty force with which the new classes are entering the struggle. The materialization of ideas—that is the task of the coming age. Not their extraction from some accumulation of facts, themselves subordinate to the blind inertia of life, not the withdrawal into an ideal world, but quite the opposite process—the conquest of the physical world by the world of ideas. Reality is a heap of fuel, ideas are sparks. These two worlds, disparate and hostile, must be fused in the flame of a world upheaval....' What d'you think of that, Katya? There it is, in black and white—a salute to the revolution. Splendid chap, Akundin!

\* Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814-1876)—an anarchist theoretician, a rabid enemy of Marxism.

\*\* Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865)—petty-bourgeois French socialist-anarchist.

It's perfectly true—there are no big ideas or emotions nowadays. The Government is guided by nothing but mortal fear for the future. The intellectuals do nothing but guzzle. We do nothing but talk, talk, talk, Katyusha, and all the time we're up to our necks in a quagmire. The people are rotting alive. The whole of Russia is eaten up by syphilis and vodka. Russia is decaying. Blow on it and it will crumble into dust. Such a life cannot go on . . . we need the sacrificial pyre, purification by fire."

Nikolai Ivanovich's mellow voice was eager, his eyes were round, his paper knife slashed the air. Ekaterina Dmitrevna stood by him, holding on to the back of a chair. When he had finished what he had to say, and started cutting the pages of the magazine again, she went up to him, and laid her hand on his hair.

"Kolya dear, what I'm going to say will hurt you very much. I wanted to conceal it, but I see I shall have to tell you. . . ."

Nikolai Ivanovich freed his head from her hand, and looked at her fixedly.

"I'm listening, Katya."

"D'you remember once when we were quarrelling I told you, in a temper, that you shouldn't be so sure of me . . . and then I took it back. . . ."

"I remember."

He put down the magazine, and turned right round in his chair. His eyes, meeting Katya's calm, frank glance, darted nervously from side to side.

"Very well, then. I told you a lie, that time . . . I really was unfaithful to you."

He screwed up his face pathetically, trying to smile. His mouth was parched. When it was no longer possible to remain silent, he said thickly:

"You did right to tell me. Thank you, Katya. . . ."

At this she lifted his hand, touching it with her lips, and pressing it to her bosom. But the hand slipped out of hers, and she made no attempt to hold it.

Then Ekaterina Dmitrevna let herself quietly down on to the carpet, and laid her head against the leather arm of the chair.

"Don't you want me to tell you any more?"

"No, Katya. Go away, please."

She got up and went out. At the door of the dining room Dasha pounced on her, squeezed her violently in her arms, and whispered, kissing her hair, her neck, her ears:

"Forgive me! Forgive me! You're marvellous, you're wonderful! I heard everything. Can you ever forgive me, Katya? Can you?"

Ekaterina Dmitrevna freed herself gently, went up to the table, smoothed out a wrinkle on the tablecloth, and said:

"I did as you told me, Dasha."

"Will you ever forgive me, Katya?"

"You were right, Dasha. It's better so."

"I wasn't right a bit! I said it out of spite.... Now I understand that nobody has the right to judge you. I don't care if we all suffer, you're right just the same. I feel it, you're altogether right. Forgive me, Katya."

Huge round tears rolled down Dasha's cheeks. She stood just behind her sister, and said in a loud whisper:

"If you don't forgive me, I don't want to go on living."

Ekaterina Dmitrevna turned sharply round to her:

"What more do you want of me? Now you want everything to be nice and cosy again. Very well, then, I'll tell you. If I lied and held my tongue, it was because that was the only way to keep on living with Nikolai Ivanovich. And now it's the end—understand? I stopped loving Nikolai Ivanovich long ago, and I've been unfaithful to him for a long time. Whether Nikolai Ivanovich loves me, or whether he doesn't, I don't know, but there's no more intimacy between us. D'you understand? And you want to hide your head under your wing, so as not to see unpleasant things. But I saw them, I understood them, and I went on living in all this filth, because I'm a weak woman. And I could see that you were being drawn into it, too. I tried to protect you, I forbade Bessonov to visit us. That was before he ... oh, what does it matter! Now it's all over and done with..."

Ekaterina Dmitrevna suddenly lifted her head, listening intently. Dasha felt cold shivers going down her spine. Nikolai Ivanovich appeared in the doorway, thrusting himself sideways between the curtains. His hands were hidden behind his back.

"Bessonov?" he said, shaking his head and smiling. He advanced into the dining room.

Ekaterina Dmitrevna did not reply. A red spot came out on either cheek, her eyes burned. She pressed her lips together.

"You seem to think our conversation is over, Katya. But you're wrong."

Smiling, he went on:

"Leave us alone, please, Dasha."

"I won't—I'm not going away!"

And Dasha stood beside her sister.

"You will if I ask you to."

"No, I won't."

"In that case, I shall have to leave the house myself."

"Do!" said Dasha, casting a furious glance at him.

Nikolai Ivanovich turned crimson, but the moment after, an expression of light-hearted insanity flickered in his eyes.

"So much the better—stay then! This is how it is, Katya . . . I sat there, after you left me, and I will admit that in these few minutes I suffered agonies. I have come to the conclusion that I shall have to kill you. Yes, that's what I must do."

When she heard this, Dasha quickly pressed against her sister, and put both arms round her. Ekaterina Dmitrevna's lips quivered contemptuously.

"You're hysterical . . . you should take some valerian, Nikolai Ivanovich."

"No, Katya, it's not hysterics this time."

"Then do what you came for!" she cried, pushing Dasha away, and going right up to Nikolai Ivanovich. "Go on, then—do it! I tell you to your face—I don't love you!"

He took a step back, laid on the tablecloth a small "lady's" revolver which he had been holding behind his back, put his fingertips into his mouth, bit them, and turned towards the door. Katya followed him with her eyes. Without turning, he said:

"It hurts so! Oh, how it hurts!"

She rushed up to him, seized him by the shoulders, and turned his face towards her.

"Lies! You're always lying! You're lying now, too!"

But he shook his head and went out. Ekaterina Dmitrevna sat down at the table.

"Well, Dasha, we've had the shooting scene from the third act," she said. "I'm going to leave him."

"Oh, Katya! You won't do that!"

"I am, I won't go on living like this. In five years I shall be old, and then it'll be too late, I simply cannot go on living like this. . . . It's too horrible!"

She lifted her hands from the table to her face, the next moment letting her head drop into the crook of her arm.

Dasha, seating herself next to her, began showering rapid, furtive kisses on her shoulder. Ekaterina Dmitrevna raised her head.

"Don't think I'm not sorry for him! I'm sorry for him all the time. But you know quite well, if I go to him now, there'll be endless talking, false through and through . . . a sort of fiend seems to come between us, lying and posturing . . . talking to Nikolai Ivanovich is like playing on a piano that needs tuning. . . . It's no good, I shall have to go away . . . oh, Dasha, Dasha, if you only knew how unhappy I am!"

But later in the evening Ekaterina Dmitrevna did go to her husband's study.

They had a long talk, each speaking quietly and mournfully, trying hard to be honest, not sparing one another, but they were both left with the feeling that nothing had been attained or clarified. The talk had not brought them nearer to one another.

Left to himself, Nikolai Ivanovich sat at the table till dawn, sighing. Later, Katya discovered that he had reviewed his whole life in those hours. The result was a lengthy epistle to his wife ending with the words: "Morally, we're all in a blind alley, Katya. I haven't had a single powerful emotion for the last five years, or taken a single important step. Even my love for you, our marriage, seem to have been just part of the general hurly-burly. It's been mere trivial existence, semihysterical, drugged. There are two ways out—to put an end to my life, or to tear off the film wrapped round my thoughts, my feelings, my consciousness. And I'm incapable of doing either the one or the other. . . ."

The domestic calamity had come about so suddenly, the world of home had fallen apart so easily and irrevocably, that Dasha was too overwhelmed to think about herself. Her girlish moods now seemed trivial to her, like the shadow of the boggy on the wall which the nurse used to frighten Katya and her with, long, long ago.



Dasha went several times a day to Katya's room, tapping on the door with her fingernail, but each time Katya called out:

"Would you mind leaving me alone, Dasha dear?"

During these days Nikolai Ivanovich had to appear in court. He would leave early, breakfast and dine at a restaurant, and return late at night. Everyone in the courtroom, including the judge himself, was carried away by the eloquence of his defence of Zoya Ivanovna Ladnikova, an excise official's wife, who had killed her lover, the student Schnippe, son of a Petersburg householder, as he lay beside her one night, in Gorokhov Street. Women sobbed. The accused, Zoya Ivanovna, beat her head against the back of her seat, and was acquitted.

Nikolai Ivanovich, coming out of the court pale and hollow-eyed, was instantly surrounded by a crowd of women, throwing flowers at him, squealing, kissing his hands. He went straight home from the courts, and talked things over with Katya in a softened spirit.

Ekaterina Dmitrevna's boxes were packed. With the utmost impartiality Nikolai Ivanovich had advised her to go to the south of France, giving her twelve thousand rubles for expenses. While talking to her, he privately resolved to leave all his cases to his deputy, and go to the Crimea, there to rest and think things over.

Neither of them really quite knew if their separation was to be a temporary or a permanent one, or who had left whom. These vital points were kept carefully in the background in the bustle of departure.

They forgot all about Dasha. Ekaterina Dmitrevna only remembered her at the last moment, when, in her grey travelling costume, smart hat, and veiled, slender and plaintive, she had gone into the hall and come upon Dasha, seated on a trunk. Dasha was swinging her legs and eating bread and marmalade, nobody having remembered to order dinner that day.

"Dasha, my pet," said Ekaterina Dmitrevna, kissing her sister through her veil. "What about you? Would you like to come with me?"

But Dasha said she would stay alone in the flat with the Grand Mogul, pass her examinations, and in the end of May go to her father for the summer.

Dasha was left all by herself in the apartment. The great rooms now seemed dreary to her, and the things in them superfluous. With the departure of the master and mistress even the cubist pictures in the drawing room seemed to fade and lose their power to terrify. The curtains hung down in lifeless folds. And though every morning the Grand Mogul went through the rooms in her silent, ghostly way with her feather duster, an invisible dust seemed to be settling ever more thickly on the house.

In her sister's room, the life of its owner could be read as in an open book. In one corner stood a small easel supporting a half-finished picture—a girl with a white wreath on her head, and eyes filling up half the face. Ekaterina Dmitrevna had clung to this easel in the hope of extricating herself from the chaos surrounding her, but her hold had not been strong enough; and here was the antique work-table filled with a confused heap of unfinished needlework, bright scraps of stuff, everything incomplete, cast aside—another attempt at escape. A similar confusion prevailed in the bookcase, and here too it was obvious that attempts at some sort of order had been made, and soon abandoned. Books with their leaves half-cut lay about everywhere. Books on Yogi, a collection of popular lectures on anthroposophy, books of verse, novels . . . so many attempts and fruitless efforts to turn over a new leaf! Dasha found a silver notebook on the dressing table, containing the words: "Twenty-four chemises, 8 bodices, 6 lace-trimmed ditto . . . tickets for the Kerenskys to *Uncle Vanya*."\* And further on, in a large, childish hand: "Buy an apple tart for Dasha."

Dasha remembered the apple tart—it had never been bought. The thought of her sister moved her almost to tears. Affectionate, kind, too sensitive for this life, she had clutched at all sorts of trivialities in her attempts to find an anchor, to save herself from utter destruction, but there had been nothing and nobody to help her.

Dasha rose early, sat over her books, and passed almost all her examinations with honours. To the telephone, which rang incessantly in the study, she always sent the Grand

\* *Uncle Vanya*—a play by Chekhov (1860-1904).

Mogul, who replied to all callers with the invariable words: "The master and mistress are away; the young lady can't come to the telephone."

Dasha spent whole evenings at the piano. Music no longer excited her as it used to, it no longer roused in her vague aspirations, or made her longing heart miss a beat. Now, seated in solemn calm at the keyboard, the music in front of her, lighted by a candle on either side, Dasha felt as if she were purifying herself with the triumphant sounds which filled this deserted house from wall to wall.

Occasionally petty foes, in the guise of unwelcome remembrances, would emerge from the midst of the music, causing Dasha to drop her hands and frown. Then it would be so quiet in the house that the guttering of the candles could be heard. Dasha would heave a gusty sigh, and once again her fingers would strike the cold keys forcefully, and the petty foes, like dust and leaves driven by the wind, would fly out of the big room into the dark passage, hiding somewhere behind cupboards and cardboard boxes. . . . The Dasha who had rung Bessonov's front-door bell, and uttered spiteful words to the defenceless Katya, had gone forever. That crazy kid had almost brought about a disaster. Just fancy—as if love were the only thing in the world! Besides, there never had been any love, really!

At about eleven Dasha would close the piano, blow out the candles, and go to bed. And it was all done in a calm, resolute manner. She made up her mind during these days that she would begin an independent life as soon as possible—she would earn her own living, and take Katya to live with her.

In the end of May, the moment she had finished her examinations, Dasha went to her father, taking the Volga route, via Rybinsk. In the evening she went straight from the train to the white steamboat, brilliantly illuminated on the dark water, unpacked in the tidy little cabin, plaited her hair, told herself that the independent life was beginning quite nicely, and, her elbow beneath her head, smiling from sheer happiness, fell asleep to the steady throbbing of the engines.

She was awakened by heavy footsteps and the sound of running to and fro on deck. The sunlight was pouring through the slatted shutters, playing in liquid rays on the

mahogany washstand. The breeze swelling the silk curtain was laden with the fragrance of honey-bearing flowers. She opened the shutters a little. The steamer lay alongside a solitary shore, where carts loaded with wooden crates were drawn up beneath the cliffy bank, from the top of which, owing to a recent landslide, protruded tangled roots, and clods of earth. A brown foal was drinking at the water's edge, straddling on its slender legs with the thick knees. On the top of the bank was a beacon in the form of a large, red cross.

Dasha leapt out of her berth, pulled out the bathtub, and letting the sponge fill with water, squeezed it against her body. The cold made her shiver and double up, laughing. Then she dressed in the clothes she had laid out the day before—white stockings, a white frock, a white hat—all fitting splendidly, and, feeling very independent, she went on deck, composed but extremely happy.

Liquid rays of sunshine were playing all over the white steamboat, and the river sparkled and shimmered so that it hurt to look at it. Amidst the undulating slopes of the other bank gleamed the white walls of an ancient belfry, half-hidden among birch trees.

When the steamer left the shore, and, describing a semicircle, started downstream, the banks of the river seemed to be coming slowly towards it. Here and there weather-beaten thatched roofs peeped out from behind mounds. Clouds, bluish at the base, were piled up in the sky, casting white reflections on the blue and yellow depths of the water.

Seated in a wicker armchair, her legs crossed, and her hands clasped round her knee, Dasha felt as if the gleaming river bends, the clouds and their white reflections, the birch-clad slopes, the meadows, the gusts of wind, wafting the fragrance of marsh plants, newly-turned earth, and fields of clover and wormwood, in rapid succession, all, all, were passing through her being, and her heart filled with quiet ecstasy.

Somebody passed slowly, stood sideways at the rail, and seemed to be looking at her. Every now and then Dasha forgot about him, but next time she looked, he was still there. She made a firm resolve not to turn her head, but—too impetuous to endure calmly such observation—she flushed

and turned with quick fury. Before her stood Telegin, holding on to a post, unable to make up his mind either to come up and speak to her, or to go away. Dasha could not help laughing—there was something inexpressibly kind and jolly about him. And Ivan Ilyich strong and bashful, broad-shouldered in his white jacket, seemed to be a fitting corollary to the peace of the river. She held out her hand to him.

"I saw you come on board," said Telegin. "As a matter of fact we were in the same carriage all the way from Petersburg. But I didn't like to bother you—you seemed so preoccupied. . . . I hope I'm not in your way. . . ."

"Do sit down," she said, pushing a wicker armchair towards him. "I'm going to my father. Where are *you* going?"

"To tell the truth, I don't quite know myself. For the time being I'm going to Kineshma, to my people."

He sat down beside her and took off his hat. His brows contracted, and wrinkles appeared on his forehead. He gazed from narrowed eyes at the concave, foaming track made by the ship in the water. River gulls hovered on their pointed wings over the water at the prow, swooping right down to its surface, only to wheel away with hoarse, plangent cries, circling and quarrelling at a safe distance over some floating crusts of bread.

"Isn't it a nice day, Darya Dmitrevna?"

"It's a glorious day, Ivan Ilyich, a glorious day! I sit here and keep telling myself I've escaped to freedom out of hell. Do you remember our talk in the street?"

"Every word of it, Darya Dmitrevna."

"If you only knew the awful things that happened after that! I'll tell you all about it one day." She shook her head pensively. "It seems to me you were the only person in Petersburg who did not go mad." She smiled and laid her hand on his sleeve. Ivan Ilyich's eyelids quivered nervously, and he compressed his lips. "I trust you absolutely, Ivan Ilyich. You must be awfully strong. You *are*, aren't you?"

"What makes you think so?"

"And reliable."

It seemed to Dasha that only kindly, simple and loving thoughts rose in her, and that the thoughts of Ivan Ilyich must also be kindly, true, and strong. And she took an

extraordinary pleasure in talking—in allowing the luminous waves of feeling to surge up in her.

"If you loved anyone, Ivan Ilyich," she said, "I'm sure you'd be ever so manly and confident. And if you wanted anything, you'd never let go of it."

Ivan Ilyich made no reply. He put his hand slowly into his pocket and brought out a hunk of bread, which he began throwing to the birds. A flock of white gulls fell upon the crumbs in mid-air, with excited cries. Dasha and Ivan Ilyich rose from their chairs and walked over to the rail.

"Throw that one a bit," said Dasha, "it looks awfully hungry."

Telegin threw the remaining piece of bread high into the air. A fat gull with a big head glided up on motionless wings, flat as blades, darted forward, but missed the bread, when immediately, a dozen others hurled themselves after the falling fragment on its way to the warm foam frothing around the keel.

"D'you know the sort of woman I'd like to be?" said Dasha. "I want to graduate next year, start making lots of money, and take my sister Katya to live with me. You'll see, Ivan Ilyich!"

While she was speaking, Telegin frowned in the effort to restrain himself, but at last, unable to hold out any longer, he opened his mouth, showing a row of strong, white teeth, and laughed so heartily that the tears wetted his eyelashes. Dasha flushed up, but her chin, too, began to quiver, and she laughed as heartily as Telegin had, without in the least knowing why.

"Darya Dmitrevna," he at last brought out. "You're wonderful! I used to be simply terrified of you. . . . But you're simply wonderful!"

"Let's go and have breakfast," said Dasha huffily.

"With pleasure!"

Ivan Ilyich ordered a table to be brought on deck, and fell to studying the menu, scratching his clean-shaven chin in a preoccupied manner.

"What would you say to a bottle of light white wine, Darya Dmitrevna?"

"Just a little would be nice."

"White or red?"

"One or the other," replied Dasha, imitating his business-like tone.

"Let's make it fizz, then!"

Past them floated the hilly bank, from which radiated green rows of silky wheat, bluish-green rye, and pinkish, flowering buckwheat. Round a bend of the river the sunlight glittered on the windows of low huts with shaggy thatches, and small piles of cow dung arranged beneath their walls, perched above the clay cliffs. Further on came the huddled crosses of a village cemetery, and a toylike mill with six sails, broken-down on one side. Flocks of small boys ran along the top of the bank after the steamer, throwing stones which did not even reach the water. The ship turned, and now there was nothing to be seen on the lonely shore but low bushes over which hawks were hovering.

The gentle breeze billowed the tablecloth and the skirt of Dasha's dress. The golden wine in the faceted wineglasses was like a gift of the gods. Dasha told Ivan Ilyich she envied him—he had his profession, confidence in life, while she would have to stoop over her books for another year and a half—not to mention the misfortune of having been born a woman.

Laughing, Telegin replied:

"But they've sacked me from the works."

"Not really?"

"Told me to clear out within twenty-four hours. Otherwise how could I be on a Volga steamer? Haven't you heard what has been going on at our works?"

"No, I haven't."

"I got off lightly. Oh, yes. . . ."

He stopped speaking, and planted an elbow on the tablecloth. "You can't think how foolishly and inefficiently everything is done here. It's incredible! God knows what a reputation we Russians are getting ourselves. It's a shame, a disgrace! Just look—a talented nation, vast natural riches, and what have we to show for it? Nothing but a set of insolent clerks! Paper and ink instead of life. You have no idea the amount of paper and ink we waste. We started all this bureaucracy in the time of Peter the Great, and it's been going on ever since. And ink can be lethal sometimes, you know!"

Ivan Ilyich pushed aside his wineglass, and lit a cigarette. Apparently it was painful for him to go on with his narrative.

"Oh, well, why look back? Let's hope things will be all right with us, too, one day—or at least no worse than they are with others."

Dasha and Ivan Ilyich spent the whole of that day on deck. To an outsider they might have seemed to be talking nonsense, whereas in reality they were using a code. In some wonderful and mysterious manner, the most ordinary words took on a double meaning, so that when Dasha, her eyes turned first upon a plump girl whose purple scarf ballooned over her shoulders, and then upon the Second Mate walking intently beside her, said: "Look, Ivan Ilyich, *they* seem to be getting on all right!" her words should have been interpreted: "If there were anything between you and me, it would be quite different." Neither could with sincerity have claimed to remember what was said, but it seemed to Ivan Ilyich that Dasha was far cleverer, subtler, and more observant than himself, while Dasha thought Ivan Ilyich was kinder, better, and infinitely wiser than she was.

Several times Dasha screwed up her courage to tell him about Bessonov, but thought better of it each time. The sun warmed her knees, the breeze caressed her cheeks, shoulders and neck with soft, gentle fingers.

"I'll tell him tomorrow," Dasha said to herself. "I'll tell him if it rains."

Dasha, who liked watching people, and was, like all women, a keen observer, by the end of the day knew practically all about everyone on the steamer, to an extent that seemed almost miraculous to Ivan Ilyich.

For some reason she had decided that the dean of Petersburg University, a morose individual who wore dark glasses and an Inverness cape, was a notorious itinerant cardsharp. And though Ivan Ilyich knew he was a dean his suspicions also were aroused—perhaps he really was a swindler! Altogether his conceptions of reality were somewhat shaken that day. He didn't know whether his head was going round, or whether he was in a waking dream. Overwhelmed by the waves of affection for everything around which kept engulfing him, he told himself how delightful it would be to throw himself this minute into the water after



the girl with short hair, if she should happen to fall overboard! If only she would!

By midnight Dasha was so suddenly and enjoyably overcome with sleepiness that she could hardly get to her cabin, where, in the doorway, she said between yawns:

"Goodnight! Mind you look out for that sharper!"

Ivan Ilyich went straight to the first-class deck-cabin, where the dean, who suffered from insomnia, was reading the works of Dumas. After looking at him for some time, and deciding that, while he might be a cardsharp, he was certainly a fine person, Ivan Ilyich returned to the brightly-lit corridor, which smelt of machine-oil, varnish, and Dasha's scent, tiptoed past her door, and, once in his own cabin, threw himself down on his bunk, and closed his eyes; he felt profoundly shaken, his whole being filled with sounds, with scents, with the sun's warmth, and with a joy which was as keen as heartache.

Some time after six he was awakened by the hooting of the steamer. They were approaching Kineshma. Ivan Ilyich dressed quickly, and peeped out into the corridor. All the doors were shut, everyone was still asleep. Dasha was asleep, too. "I ought to get out here, it would look queer if I didn't," he told himself. Going on deck, he regarded Kineshma, which was coming into sight with ruthless inevitability. It stood on the high, steep bank, with its wooden stairs, its jumble of wooden houses, the pale green leaves of the limes in the municipal park gleaming in the morning light, a motionless cloud of dust over the carts trailing up and down its slopes. A sailor appeared with Telegin's light-brown suitcase, treading the deck firmly on his bare heels.

"I've changed my mind—take it back!" said Ivan Ilyich in agitated tones. "I've decided to go on to Nizhni, you see. I didn't specially need to get off at Kineshma. Put it here, under the bunk. Thank you, my lad."

Ivan Ilyich sat for three hours in his cabin, wondering how he could explain to Dasha what he regarded as his vulgar and intrusive behaviour and deciding that no explanation was possible: he could neither lie to her, nor tell her the truth.

At eleven o'clock, full of remorse, hating and despising himself, he made his appearance on deck—hands behind his back, with a kind of plunging gait, and an unnatural

expression on his face, the very embodiment of vulgarity! But having gone the round of the decks, and not seen Dasha, he became upset, and started looking everywhere. Dasha was not to be seen. His mouth felt parched. Something must have happened. And suddenly he came right up against her. She was sitting where they had sat the night before, in the wicker armchair, forlorn and quiet. On her lap were a book and a pear. She turned her head slowly towards Ivan Ilyich and her eyes, at first widening as if from fear, were suffused with joy; the colour crept into her cheeks, the pear rolled off her lap.

"You here? You didn't get off?" she said softly.

Ivan Ilyich swallowed his excitement, sat down beside her, and said in muffled tones:

"I don't know what you'll think of me, but I decided not to get off at Kineshma."

"What I think of you? I'm not going to tell you that!" laughed Dasha, and unexpectedly put her hand into his, simply and affectionately, so that once again Ivan Ilyich's head began to swim, and continued in that state all day, even worse than the day before.

\* X \*

What had really happened at the Engineering Works was this: one rainy evening, when the sulphurous sky was almost covered with ragged clouds and the hooters were stridently announcing the end of a work shift, a stranger in a waterproof coat with the hood turned up, appeared in the midst of the workers returning home by the narrow, evil-smelling side street, begrimed with the sooty, metallic dirt peculiar to the vicinity of great factories.

He went a short way with the crowd, then stopped, and began handing out leaflets right and left, saying under his breath:

"From the Central Committee.... Read it, Comrades."

The workers snatched up the leaflets without stopping, and thrust them into their pockets, or inside their caps.

When the man in the waterproof had got rid of almost all his leaflets, a watchman shouldered his way through the crowd to him, seizing him from behind by his coat with a

hurried: "You wait here." But the stranger, slippery from standing so long in the rain, tore himself away, and made off at a run. A shrill whistle was heard, answered from a distance by another. A hollow murmur passed over the thinning crowd. But the task was accomplished, and the man in the waterproof had disappeared.

A day or two later, to the surprise of the management of the Engineering Works, the entire tool shop went on strike, formulating demands which, moderate enough in themselves, were extremely insistent. Snatches of speech, observations, angry words, flew like sparks about the long factory sheds, in the dim light coming through the dirty windows and smoky glass roofs. The workers stood at their lathes, looking curiously at the members of the office staff as they passed, and awaiting further instructions with suppressed excitement.

Senior foreman Pavlov, an informer and a sneak, had his foot accidentally crushed by a red-hot mould, while hanging about near a hydraulic press. His wild shrieks sent a rumour flying over the works that somebody had been killed. At nine o'clock the huge limousine of the chief engineer came dashing into the factory yard with the impact of a hurricane.

Ivan Ilyich Telegin arrived at his usual hour at the foundry, a vast circular building with here and there a broken windowpane, iron cables hanging from overhead cranes, smelting furnaces ranged against the walls, and an earth floor. Standing in the doorway, his shoulders hunched against the morning freshness, Telegin shook hands and exchanged cheerful greetings with foreman Punko, who had just come up to him.

An urgent order for motor cheeks had been received by the foundry, and Ivan Ilyich began talking to Punko of the work before them, consulting him gravely about matters as to which neither of them had the slightest doubt. This innocent manoeuvre had the effect of gratifying the self-esteem of Punko, who was well pleased with the conversation. He had come to the foundry fifteen years before as an unskilled labourer, and having risen to be senior foreman, he rated his own knowledge and experience highly. Telegin knew that so long as Punko was pleased, the work would go well.

Going the rounds of the foundry, Ivan Ilyich stopped to speak to smelters and moulders, in jocose friendly tones

which clearly defined their relations: we're all engaged on the same work, so we're comrades, but I'm an engineer, and you're a worker, so we are essentially foes. Since, however, we respect one another, the only thing left to us is to chaff one another.

A crane swung round towards one of the furnaces, lowering its clanking cable. Phillip Shubin and Ivan Oreshnikov set to work immediately. They were strapping, brawny fellows—the former with grey streaks in his black hair, wearing spectacles, the latter with a curly beard, and fair hair bound with a leather fillet, blue-eyed, powerfully built. Shubin knocked the brick shield off the front of the furnace with a crowbar, while Oreshnikov fastened the jaws of the crane to the tall, white-hot crucible. The cable rattled, and the crucible swung outwards, floating through the air towards the middle of the shed, hissing, gleaming and shedding fragments of clinker.

"Stop!" cried Oreshnikov. "Lower!"

Once more the winch groaned; the crucible descended, and a blinding stream of bronze, emitting green stars bursting as they fell, and casting an orange glow over the vaulted roof, poured itself out on to the ground, with a sickly-sweet smell of copper fumes.

Just then the double doors leading to the next shed were flung open, and a young worker with a pale, angry face marched into the foundry with firm, rapid steps.

"Stop work and get out!" he shouted in harsh, jerky tones, darting a side glance towards Telegin. "Do you hear me? Or do you not?"

"We hear you, you needn't shout," replied Oreshnikov calmly, raising his head to look at the crane. "Don't go to sleep, Dmitri. . . ."

"Very well, then, since you heard, you know what to do. We shan't ask you again," said the worker, thrusting his hands into his pockets, turning briskly, and walking out of the shed.

Ivan Ilyich was squatting beside the fresh casting, carefully scraping off the earth with a piece of wire. Punko, perched on a high stool at a desk next to the door, began nervously stroking his grey goatee.

"Like it or not," he said, his eyes darting from side to side, "we've got to stop working. Do those fellows think how we're going to feed our kids if we're sacked?"

"You'd better not meddle in this, Vasili Stepanovich," replied Oreshnikov, huskily.

"Why not?"

"This is our mess—so you just hold your tongue! You'll be all right, you only have to run and cringe to the bosses."

"What's the strike about?" Telegin could not help asking. "What demands have been advanced?"

Oreshnikov, whom he had addressed, averted his eyes. Punko replied for him:

"The tool-room workers are on strike. Last week sixty lathes were transferred to piece-work as an experiment. Well, and it appears that way they didn't make as much as before, so they had to do overtime. A list of all sorts of demands has been stuck on the door of Number Six, but they're nothing special."

He dug his pen viciously into the inkpot and went on with the list he was drawing up. His hands behind his back, Telegin strolled past the furnaces, and said, after peeping through a round opening at the boiling bronze, dancing in snakelike coils in the insufferable white heat of the flames:

"Hasn't this thing been in there long enough, Oreshnikov?"

Without replying, Oreshnikov took off his leather apron, hung it on a nail, put on a sheepskin cap and a long thick coat, and said in his deep bass voice, which carried all over the shop:

"Stop working, Comrades! All come to Number Six—the middle door."

And he walked towards the exit. Silently the workers threw down their tools, emerging from behind lathes, from cranes, from pits in the ground, and crowding after Oreshnikov. There was a sudden outburst in the doorway—a frantic voice, breaking into a scream, was heard:

"Writing-son-of-a-bitch? Go on, write down my name! Tell the bosses!"

It was Alexei Nosov, a moulder, shouting at Punko. His worn, unshaven face, with dull, sunken eyes, was distorted with rage, a vein standing out on his skinny neck. He went on shouting, banging on the edge of the desk with his blackened fist.

"Bloodsuckers! Torturers! We'll settle your hash too!"

Then Oreshnikov seized Nosov round the middle, jerked him away from the desk with ease, and propelled him towards the door. Nosov quieted down immediately. The workshop was now deserted.

By noon the whole factory was on strike. There were rumours of disturbances at the Obukhov Works and the Neva Engineering Plant. The workers stood about the factory yard in big groups, waiting to see what the negotiations between the management and the strike committee would come to.

The meeting was held in the office. The management was alarmed, and ready to make concessions. The only hitch arose with regard to a door in the board fence, which the workers demanded should be kept unlocked, so that they need not go round and plough their way through a quarter of a mile of mud. Nobody really cared in the slightest about this door, but it had become a point of honour with both parties, and, the management suddenly turning obstinate, a long dispute began.

Then came an order by telephone from the Ministry for the Interior—to concede to none of the strike committee's demands, and to enter into no negotiations whatsoever till further notice.

This order had such a disastrous effect that the chief engineer set off headlong to town, to have the matter elucidated. The workers were perplexed, but on the whole their spirit was peaceful. Some engineers went about among the crowd, explaining and gesticulating. There was even laughter here and there. At last a huge, corpulent, grey-haired individual, engineer Bulbin by name, appeared on the steps of the office, and called out in a voice heard all over the yard, that negotiations had been postponed till the following day.

Ivan Ilyich, who remained at the foundry till evening, on seeing that the furnace would go out anyhow, scratched the back of his head, and went home. The futurists, who were sitting in the dining room, appeared to take a lively interest in events at the works. But Ivan Ilyich told them nothing. He ate the sandwiches which Elizaveta Kievna set before him with an abstracted air, and went straight to his room, locking the door and getting into bed.

He could see from afar, as he drove up to the works the next day, that things were not going well. All over the street, groups of workers were standing and talking. There was a huge crowd at the gate, several hundred strong, and buzzing like a hive of angry bees.

Nobody took any notice of Ivan Ilyich in his soft felt hat and civilian coat, but by listening to the talk of various groups he learned that the entire strike committee had been arrested in the night, and workers were still being arrested; that a new committee had been elected, and were now advancing demands of a political nature; that the factory yard was full of Cossacks, who were said to have been given orders to disperse the crowd, but had refused; and last but not least, that the Obukhov Works, the Neva Shipbuilding Works, the French Factory and various other smaller ones, had gone on strike, too.

Ivan Ilyich endeavoured to make his way to the office to learn the news, but his utmost efforts only brought him as far as the factory gate. There, beside the familiar watchman, in his voluminous sheepskin coat, stood two tall Cossacks, their round caps on one side, their beards parted in the middle. Their glances travelled with cheerful insolence over the haggard, sickly faces of the workers; themselves they had sleek, fresh-coloured countenances, and looked aggressive and derisive.

"Not many scruples about those chaps," said Ivan Ilyich to himself, attempting to get into the yard. The Cossack nearest to him instantly barred the way, staring at him insolently, and shouting:

"Where are you trying to go? Stand back!"

"I've got to go to the office. I'm an engineer."

"Stand back, I say!"

Voices arose from the crowd:

"Infidels! Bloodhounds!"

"Haven't you spilt enough of our blood?"

"Fat beasts! Kulaks!"

Just then a short, pimply youth with a great, crooked nose, a coat much too big for him, and a tall cap perched awkwardly on his curly hair, pushed his way to the front of the crowd. Gesturing with his skinny arms, he exclaimed, lisping:

"Comrade Cossacks! We're all Russians, aren't we? Who are you taking arms against? Against your own brothers!"

Are we your foes that you should shoot us? What is it we want? We want all Russians to be happy. We want all men to be free. We want to destroy despotism. . . ."

The Cossack, compressing his lips, surveyed the young man contemptuously from head to foot, turned on his heel, and paced up and down in the gateway. The other one said in a pompous, affected voice:

"We cannot allow rioting, we have taken the oath."

The first Cossack, having now found something to say in answer to the curly-haired youth, shouted:

"Brothers, brothers . . . hitch up your trousers, they're coming down."

And both Cossacks laughed.

Ivan Ilyich turned away from the gates, and, pushed aside by the movement of the crowd, was carried right up to a heap of scrap iron lying at the foot of the fence. While he was trying to get on to the heap, he caught sight of Oreshnikov, his sheepskin cap perched on the back of his head, calmly munching bread. Seeing Telegin he raised his brows, saying in his bass voice:

"A nice state of affairs, Ivan Ilyich!"

"Good morning, Oreshnikov! How d'you think all this will end?"

"We shall just go on shouting for a bit, and then go to the bosses, cap in hand. That's all that ever comes of rebelling. They've brought out the Cossacks. What have we got to fight them with? Should I chuck this old turnip of mine at them and kill a couple?"

Just then a murmur rose from the crowd, followed by silence, broken a moment or two later by an imperious, abrupt voice from the gateway.

"Go back home, all of you, please! Your requests will be looked into. Please disperse quietly."

The crowd, excited, moved backwards and sideways. Some retreated, some advanced. The talk increased in volume. Oreshnikov said:

"This is the third time they've asked us nicely."

"Who was it speaking?"

"The Cossack officer."

"Don't disperse, Comrades!" an excited voice was heard to cry, and behind Ivan Ilyich there jumped on to the heap of scrap iron a pale, agitated man in a big hat, with an un-



kempt black beard, beneath which his smart jacket was fastened at the neck with a safety pin.

"Whatever you do, don't go away, Comrades," he cried in stentorian tones, flinging up his clenched fists. "We have it on good authority that the Cossacks have refused to fire. The management are negotiating with the strike committee through intermediaries. And that's not all—the railwaymen are now considering a general strike. The government are in a panic."

"Bravo!" shouted a frenzied voice. The crowd hummed, the speaker plunged into it, and disappeared. People could be seen running up the street.

Ivan Ilyich tried to catch sight of Oreshnikov, but the latter was already some distance off, at the gate. The word "Revolution!" could be heard intermittently.

Ivan Ilyich felt thrills of nervous, but joyous excitement pass over him. Clambering on to the heap of scrap iron he let his eyes wander over the now enormous crowd, till they fell upon Akundin, standing quite near him. He had on glasses, a cap with a big peak, and a black cloak.

A man in a bowler hat was pushing his way towards him, his lips quivering. Telegin heard him say to Akundin:

"Do come, Ivan Avakumovich, they're waiting for you."

"I'm not going," said Akundin with savage brevity.

"The whole committee's there. They won't take any decision without you, Ivan Avakumovich."

"I adhere to my opinion—everyone knows that."

"Are you mad? You see what's going on! I tell you the firing will begin any minute."

The lips of the gentleman in the bowler hat quivered still more violently.

"In the first place—don't shout," said Akundin. "Go and pass your compromise resolution. I won't be a party to provocation."

"Damn it all! He's simply mad!" said the gentleman in the bowler hat, and pushed his way back through the crowd.

The worker who had told the men to down tools the day before in Telegin's shop, now edged his way to Akundin. Akundin said something to him, and he nodded and disappeared. The same procedure—the brief phrase, followed by a nod—was repeated when another worker came up.

But just then warning cries were heard in the crowd, and suddenly three short, sharp shots rang out. There was instant silence. A stifled groan, drawn out in what seemed an unnatural manner, was heard. The crowd gave way, retreating from the gate. A Cossack lay face down on the trampled mud, his knees drawn upward. Shouts of terrified protest arose on all sides, as the gates swung open.

Then a fourth revolver shot rang out from somewhere or other, and a few stones were hurled into the air, knocking against the iron palings as they fell. At that moment Telegin caught sight of Oreshnikov, standing solitary and capless, with open mouth, in front of the crowd which was now dispersing in confusion. He stood there in his enormous boots, motionless with horror. Rifle shots rent the air like the crack of a whip—one, two, and then a volley,—and Oreshnikov, dropping quietly to his knees, fell flat on his face.

A week later the investigations into the disturbance at the works were over. Iyan Ilyich's name was on the list of persons suspected of being in sympathy with the workers. When called to the office, to the astonishment of all he spoke sharply to the management, and gave in his resignation.

## \* XI \*

Doctor Dmitri Stepanovich Bulavin, Dasha's father, sat in his dining room next to the great steaming samovar, reading the local newspaper—*The Samara Bulletin*. When his cigarette burned itself down to the wad of cotton wool in the end, the doctor drew another from his bulky, well-filled cigarette case, lit it at the end of the one just finished, coughed till he was red in the face, and scratched at his hairy chest through the opening of his shirt. He sipped weak tea from a saucer while reading, and the ash from his cigarette fell on the newspaper, his shirt, and the tablecloth.

A bed creaked in the next room, followed by the sound of footsteps, and Dasha came in, a dressing gown thrown over her nightdress, her face rosy with sleep. Dmitri Stepanovich, looking at his daughter over his cracked pince-nez with eyes as cool and mocking as Dasha's own, held out his cheek to her. Dasha kissed it, and sat down opposite, reaching for the bread and the butter.

"Another windy day," she said.

A strong, hot wind had been blowing since the day before. A veil of lime dust hung over the town, obscuring the sun. Thick clouds of gritty dust blew in gusts over the street, the infrequent passers-by turning their backs every time a gust came. The dust got into all chinks, and through the frames of the windows, lying in thick layers on the window sills, and gritting between the teeth. The wind shook the windows and rattled the iron roof. At the same time it was hot and stuffy, and the smell of the streets crept even into the rooms.

"An epidemic of eye diseases. Well, well," said Dmitri Stepanovich.

Dasha sighed.

A fortnight ago she and Telegin had parted on the gangway, he having after all accompanied her all the way to Samara, and ever since she had been living with her father, with nothing to do, in this new, unfamiliar, empty apartment, with crates of books standing in the hall, no curtains at the windows, and everything at sixes and sevens, so that it was impossible to settle down in comfort anywhere. It was as bad as living at an inn.

Stirring the tea in her glass, Dasha looked dejectedly through the window at the whirling clouds of grey dust. Now that she was home again, she felt as if the last two years had been a mere dream, and that these clouds of dust were all that remained of her hopes and excitements, of the numerous people she had met, of noisy Petersburg itself.

"The Archduke has been assassinated," said Dmitri Stepanovich, turning the page of his paper.

"Which one?"

"The Archduke Ferdinand of Austria of course! He's been assassinated in Sarajevo."

"Was he young?"

"I don't know. Pour me out another glass."

Dmitri Stepanovich placed a small lump of sugar between his teeth—he always drank his tea through sugar—and glanced ironically at Dasha.

"Tell me," he said, raising his saucer to his lips, "has Ekaterina left her husband for good?"

"I told you all about it, Papa."

"Well, well. . . ."

He resumed the reading of the newspaper. Dasha walked over to the window. How depressing everything was! She remembered the white steamer, the pervading sunlight, the blue sky, the river, the clean deck,—sunshine, moisture, freshness everywhere. At the time it had seemed as if the shining pathway of the broad, slowly winding river, the steamer *Fyodor Dostoyevsky*, herself and Telegin, were all being borne towards a blue, shoreless ocean of light and joy—towards bliss. Dasha had been in no hurry then, though she knew what Telegin was going through, and was not displeased to know it. Why should she be in a hurry, when every moment of their journey was so enjoyable, and when they were drifting towards happiness anyhow?

But as they neared Samara, a gloom settled over Ivan Ilyich's features, and he stopped making jokes. "We are drifting towards happiness," Dasha had told herself, and then she had felt his glance resting on her—the glance of a man, once strong and light-hearted, over whom cruel wheels have passed. She pitied him, but did not know what to do. How could she let him come ever so slightly nearer to herself, knowing that it would mean the instant precipitation of what ought only to occur at the appointed time. If she did this, they would never arrive at their happiness, for they would have wasted it on the way in their impatience. Therefore she was affectionate to Ivan Ilyich, and no more. And he had been afraid of offending Dasha by so much as hinting at the thing which had kept him awake four nights running; he was living in a peculiar half-visionary world, in which externals slipped by like shadows in a bluish mist, and Dasha's grey eyes shone with an awe-inspiring light. He was only conscious of scents and sunlight, and an incessant pain at his heart.

At Samara Ivan Ilyich changed to another steamer, and went back. And Dasha's radiant ocean, towards which she had been peacefully drifting, disappeared, and in its place was nothing but clouds of dust seen through the rattling windowpane.

"The Austrians will give those Serbians a wiggling," said Dmitri Stepanovich, removing his glasses, and throwing them on to the newspaper. "And what do *you* think of the Slav question, Kitten?"

From her place at the window Dasha shrugged her shoulders.

"Will you be back to dinner?" she asked wearily.

"Impossible! I have a scarlet fever case at the Postnikovs', out of town."

With leisured movements, Dmitri Stepanovich picked up his false shirt front from the table, put it on, buttoned up his shantung jacket, felt in his pockets to see if everything he needed was there, and began combing his grey, curling hair over his forehead with a broken comb.

"Well, what about the Slav question, eh?"

"Oh, how do I know, Papa! Why do you keep on at me so?"

"Ah, but I have my own opinion, Darya Dmitrevna."

He was obviously in no hurry to leave for the country, and anyhow he was fond of talking about politics of a morning, over the samovar. "The Slav question—are you listening?—is the key of world politics. Many people will come to grief over it. That's why the Balkans, the original home of the Slavs, is neither more nor less than Europe's appendicitis. And why, you will ask? I'll tell you." He doubled up his stubby fingers one after another as he checked off his points. "In the first place, there are over two hundred million Slavs, and they multiply like rabbits. In the second place, the Slavs have succeeded in creating such a powerful military state as the Russian Empire. Thirdly, the lesser Slavonic groups, despite assimilation, are organizing in independent units, and gravitating towards the so-called Pan-Slavonic Alliance. Last but not least, the Slav represents a type which is morally quite new, and in some respects a danger to European civilization—the God-seekers. And 'God-seeking'—are you listening, Kitten?—spells the negation and destruction of modern civilization. I seek for God, that is, Truth, within myself. For that I need to be perfectly free, to destroy the moral foundations beneath which I am buried, the State which holds me in thrall."

"Do go, Papa!" said Dasha wearily.

"Truth must be sought there!" continued Dmitri Stepanovich. He pointed downwards as if towards the nether regions, but suddenly broke off, and moved to the door. The front-door bell rang shrilly. "Go and open the door, Dasha."

"I can't—I'm not dressed."

"Matryona!" cried Dmitri Stepanovich. "Confound that woman!", and went himself to open the door, returning with a letter in his hand.

"From Katya," he said. "Wait a minute—don't snatch! Let me finish what I was saying. Very well, then—God-seeking inevitably begins by destroying, and this period is extremely dangerous and contagious. Russia is in precisely this stage of the disease now. Just go out in the evening into the main street—all you hear is: 'Help! Help!' The streets are full of cutthroats, the police can't cope with the hooliganism. These fellows have no morals whatever, they're God-seekers. D'you follow me, Kitten? They swagger about the main street today, they'll be swaggering all over Russia tomorrow and the nation as a whole is going through the first stage of God-seeking—the destruction of foundations."

With this, Dmitri Stepanovich gave a loud sniff, and lit a cigarette. Dasha seized Katya's letter and carried it off to her room. Dmitri Stepanovich continued arguing for some time, then, banging doors after him, he went from room to room over the painted floors of the half-dismantled, dusty apartment, till he at last left for the country.

"My own Dashenka," wrote Katya. "So far I have had no news of you or Nikolai. I'm living in Paris. It's the height of the season now. Dresses are worn very narrow in the skirt, chiffon is in fashion. Paris is very beautiful. And absolutely everyone dances the tango—you ought to see them! They dance between the courses at lunch, they dance at tea-time, all through dinner, and right on into the small hours. I can't get away from that music, it's somehow sad and desolate and wistful. I feel as if I were burying my youth, that something has gone beyond recall, when I look at all these women with their low-cut dresses, and their made-up eyes, and the men hanging round them. On the whole I'm depressed. I keep thinking somebody's going to die. I'm nervous about Papa. After all, he's no longer young. The place is full of Russians—all our friends are here; every day we go somewhere all together, it's just as if I'd never left Petersburg. By the way, somebody here told me Nikolai was living with a woman—a widow with three children, one of them quite a baby. At first, you know, I was awfully hurt. And then somehow I began to feel so sorry for the baby.... Oh, Dasha, sometimes I do so long to have a baby! But that could

only be if one loved the man. When you marry you must have a baby—d'you hear?"

Dasha read the letter again and again, shed a few tears, especially over the part about the innocent baby, and sat down to write a reply. This took her till dinner, which she ate alone, merely picking at her food. After dinner she went to the study and began rummaging among heaps of old magazines till she found a novel—a good long one. Lying on the sofa with books scattered around her, she read till evening. At last her father came back, tired out and covered with dust. At suppertime he replied to all questions with an absent-minded "M'h'm," but Dasha elicited the information that the scarlet fever patient, a three-year-old boy, had died.

Having conveyed this much, Dmitri Stepanovich gave a sniff, put his pince-nez into its case, and retired for the night. Dasha, too, got into bed, covered her head with the sheet, and cried her eyes out at the thought of so much sadness.

Two days went by. The dust storm ended in thunder and torrents of rain, which drummed all night on the roof, and the next morning—a Sunday—ushered in a calm, fresh day.

Dasha was hardly up, when Semyon Semyonovich Govyadin, a statistical clerk in the Zemstvo, and an old friend of the family, came to visit her. He was lean, stoop-shouldered and pallid, with a fair beard and his hair combed behind his ears. He smelt of sour cream. He neither drank nor smoked, and never touched meat, and the police had their eye on him. As soon as he had greeted Dasha, he said with a jocularly which had no apparent cause:

"I've come for you, woman. We're going on the Volga."

"And so it all ended with the statistician Govyadin," said Dasha to herself.

But she picked up her white parasol and followed Semyon Semyonovich down the slope to the landing place, where the boats were moored.

Dockers and freight-carriers—broad-shouldered, deep-chested men and lads, bare-headed and bare-necked—were roving up and down past shingled grain depots, piles of timber, and bales of wool and cotton. Some were playing pitch and toss, some sleeping on sacks and planks. About thirty were running down the shaky gangways with crates on their shoulders. A drunken man, covered with dirt and dust, his cheek bleeding, was standing beside a cart, holding

up his trousers with both hands, and swearing with lazy obscenity.

"These people know neither holidays nor leisure," remarked Semyon Semyonovich dogmatically. "But you and I are going to enjoy nature at our leisure, like wise, educated people."

Saying this, he stepped over the enormous bare legs of a deep-chested, loose-lipped fellow, lying flat on the ground. Another was seated on a log, munching a roll. Dasha heard the one on the ground call after her: "That's the sort for us, Phillip!"

But the other replied, his mouth full: "Too genteel! Too much trouble!"

Little boats, bound for the sandy shore on the other side, were silhouetted against the shimmering reflections of sunlight on the broad yellow surface of the river. Govyadin hired one. Asking Dasha to steer, he took the oars himself, and started rowing against the current. In a short time beads of perspiration showed on his pale face.

"Sport is a great thing," said Semyon Semyonovich, and he began taking off his jacket, unfastening his braces with a sheepish air and flinging them into the bows. His skinny feeble arms were covered with long hairs, and he wore celluloid cuffs. Dasha opened her parasol, and looked at the water, her eyes screwed up.

"Excuse the impertinent question, Darya Dmitrevna, but they say in town that you're going to be married. Is it true?"

"No, it's not."

At this he gave a broad grin, which did not suit his anxious, studious countenance, and started singing "Down the Volga" in a reedy voice, but broke off, embarrassed, and plied the oars with sudden violence.

A boat came towards them, full of people. Three common-looking women in green and crimson cashmere dresses were nibbling sunflower seeds, spitting out the husks into their laps. Opposite them was a typical hoodlum, dead-drunk, curly-haired, black-moustached, rolling his eyes frantically, and grinding out a polka on his accordion. Another youth was rowing furiously, rocking the boat from side to side, while a third, waving a spare oar, shouted to Semyon Semyonovich.

"Keep on the right, you muff!"

And they passed quite close, shouting and swearing.



At last the boat slipped with a rustling noise over the sandy bottom. Dasha jumped on to the shore. Semyon Semyonovich put on his braces and coat again.

"I may be a town-dweller, but I really do love nature," he said, screwing up his eyes. "Especially when a maiden's figure is thrown in. There's something Turgenev-like in it then, to my mind. Let's go to the woods."

They strolled over the hot sand, sinking into it over their ankles. Govyadin came to a halt every few steps, mopping his face, and exclaiming:

"Do look! What a delightful spot!"

At last the sands came to an end, and a short slope had to be climbed, leading to a meadow in which the grass had been cut here and there, and lay in fading heaps. There was a warm smell of honey-bearing flowers. A shaggy nut tree hung over the water at the top of a narrow gulley. In a hollow filled with lush grass a murmuring brook emptied itself into a depression further on, forming a tiny round lake. On its bank grew ancient lime trees and a rugged pine, its one surviving branch sticking out like an arm. Further on, along the top of a narrow crest of land, flowered a bush of white roses. It was a spot favoured by snipe during their migratory flights. Dasha and Semyon Semyonovich sat down on the grass. The water in the winding gulley below them reflected the blue of the sky and the green of the overhanging leaves. Not far from Dasha two small grey birds were flitting inside a bush from branch to branch, chirping monotonously. And a wood pigeon cooed patiently from a thicket, with all the melancholy of an abandoned lover. Her legs outstretched, her hands on her knees, Dasha listened to the tender accents of the abandoned lover in the branches.

*"Darya Dmitrevna, Darya Dmitrevna, what's the matter with you—why are you so sad, what makes you want to cry? Nothing has happened yet, and you mourn as if life was over for you, as if it had passed by, flown away. You're just a crybaby, that's what you are."*

"I want to be frank with you, Darya Dmitrevna," said Govyadin. "May I, as they say, cast aside convention. . . ."

"You can say what you like—it's all the same to me," said Dasha, and lay on her back, her hands beneath her head, so as to see the sky, and not Semyon Semyonovich's roving glance, furtively resting on her white stockings.

"You're a proud, daring girl. You're young, beautiful, overflowing with life. . . ."

"Well?" said Dasha.

"Surely you must sometimes have longed to destroy the conventional morals instilled by your education and background? Surely you do not feel bound to suppress your beautiful instincts in the name of a moral code which has been rejected by all authorities!"

"Well—and if I do not wish to suppress my beautiful instincts—what then?" asked Dasha with languid curiosity.

The sun was warming her, and it was so delightful to stare into the throbbing rays of the sun in the blue depths of the sky that she wanted neither to think nor to move.

Semyon Semyonovich fell silent, digging into the earth with his finger. Dasha knew he was married to Marya Davidovna, a midwife, and that Marya Davidovna gathered up her three children several times a year and went back to her mother, who lived just across the street. Semyon Semyonovich, explaining these family disturbances to his colleagues in the Zemstvo office, ascribed them to Marya Davidovna's sensual and restless nature. Marya Davidovna herself explained them in the Zemstvo hospital by saying that her husband was ready to deceive her with anyone who came along, that he thought of nothing else, and if he did not actually deceive her, it was out of cowardice and apathy, which was still worse, and she could no longer stand his long, vegetarian face. During these separations, Semyon Semyonovich, hatless, would cross the street several times a day. Then husband and wife would have a reconciliation, and Marya Davidovna would go back to her home, with her children and her pillows.

"When a woman finds herself alone with a man, she feels a natural desire to belong to him—a man, conversely, to possess her body," said Semyon Semyonovich at last, clearing his throat. "I challenge you to be honest and frank. Look into the depths of your being, and you will see that, amidst prejudice and falsity, there glows in you the desire of natural, healthy sensuality."

"No desire whatever glows in me," said Dasha. "I wonder why!"

She felt amused and languid. A bee roved in the pale calyx and yellow pollen of a wild rose over her head. And the

abandoned lover in the aspen grove never ceased murmuring: "*Darya Dmitrevna, Darya Dmitrevna, can it be that you're in love? You're in love, that's what it is! That's why you are so sad.*" Listening to it, Dasha began to laugh quietly.

"You seem to have sand in your shoes. Let me shake it out," said Semyon Semyonovich in a strange, hollow voice, and tried to pull off her shoe by the heel. At this Dasha quickly sat up, tore the shoe out of his hand, and struck Semyon Semyonovich on the cheek with it.

"You cad!" she said. "I never thought you were such a beast!"

Putting on her shoe, she rose to her feet, picked up her parasol, and went towards the river without a glance at Govyadin.

"Fool that I was, I never even asked him for his address, so that I could write," she said to herself. "It was either Kineshma, or Nizhni. So now you can stick here with Govyadin! Oh, God!" Turning, she saw Govyadin striding down the grassy slope, with averted gaze and lifting each foot like a stork. "I'll write to Katya: 'Just fancy! I do believe I'm in love, I really do!'"

Dasha repeated under her breath: "Dear, dear, dear Ivan Ilyich!"

Just then, from somewhere quite near, came a voice: "I won't get in, I won't! Leave go of my skirt—you'll tear it!" A naked elderly man with a short beard and sallow ribs, a black cross hanging down over his hollow chest, was running along the shore up to his knees in the water. An obscene figure, he was trying silently and malevolently to drag a dreary-looking female into the water. "Let me go—you're tearing my skirt!" she repeated.

Then Dasha ran as fast as she could along the shore to the boat, her throat contracted with shame and loathing. While she was pushing the boat into the water, Govyadin came running up, out of breath. Neither answering nor looking round, Dasha seated herself in the stern, and, sheltering behind her parasol, she said not a word the whole way back.

After this excursion Dasha began to nourish a resentment against Telegin which was inexplicable even to herself. She blamed him for everything—the wretched, dusty, sun-baked provincial town, the jerry-built boxlike houses, rotting fences and detestable gateways, the telegraph posts and tram stan-

dards in the treeless streets. She even blamed him for the sultry heat at noon, when a dazed woman roamed the dust-white, shadeless streets with bunches of smoked fish suspended from her shoulders, looking up at the dusty windows, and shouting: "Smoked fish!", with no one to notice her but a dog, also dazed, indeed, half-mad, which would sniff at the fish, while a barrel organ ground out the tune of an old waltz from a distant yard.

It was all Telegin's fault that Dasha reacted so sensitively now to all this middle-class smugness, which would probably go on for ever and ever, making one long to rush out into the street, and shriek at the top of one's voice. "I want to live! To live, d'you hear me?"

It was Telegin's fault that he had been so excessively shy and retiring. After all, it was not for Dasha to say: "Can't you see I love you?" It was his fault that he sent no word of himself, that he had vanished into thin air, perhaps without giving her a second thought.

And to add to all this misery, on one of those sultry nights, black as the inside of an oven, Dasha had dreamed the same dream that she had once awakened from in tears in Petersburg, and it had escaped her memory as it had then, vanishing like steam evaporating on glass. She could not help feeling that this agonizing, troublous dream foreshadowed some disaster. Dmitri Stepanovich advised her to have arsenic injections. Then came another letter from Katya.

"Dear Dasha," she wrote. "I miss you terribly, you and everyone, and Russia. More and more I begin to feel I was wrong to leave Nikolai. I wake up thinking about it, and all day I go about with a feeling of guilt, and a kind of spiritual rottenness. And then—I don't remember if I told you—there's a man who has been following me about for weeks. When I go out of the house, he comes towards me. When I'm in the lift in one of the big shops, he jumps in as it is going up. I was at the Louvre yesterday, and sat down on a bench in one of the galleries feeling tired, when suddenly I had the feeling that a hand was being passed over my back. I turned round, and there he was, sitting not far away—thin black hair going very grey, and a beard that looked as if it had been stuck on to his cheeks. His hands were clasped over the top of his stick, and he was looking sternly in front of him—he's very hollow-eyed. He never says a word, and

never pesters me, but I'm afraid of him. I feel as if he were making circles round me. . . ."

Dasha showed this letter to her father. The next morning, Dmitri Stepanovich said casually over his newspaper:

"Go to the Crimea, Kitten."

"What for?"

"Hunt out Nikolai Ivanovich, and tell him he's a fool. Let him go to Paris, to his wife. . . . He must do as he likes, of course. It's their private affair."

Dmitri Stepanovich was angry and flustered, though he detested showing his feelings. Dasha suddenly cheered up—she pictured the Crimea as an exquisite blue tract, loud with the breaking of waves. She was haunted by images of a long shadow cast by a Lombardy poplar, a stone bench, a scarf fluttering around her head, and restless eyes watching her. . . .

She packed up quickly, and set off for Eupatoria, where Nikolai Ivanovich was taking sea baths.

## \* XII \*

There was an extraordinary rush of visitors from the North in the Crimea that summer. The aloof dwellers of Petersburg, bringing with them colds and bronchitis, noisy, untidy Moscow-dwellers, with their lazy, singsong speech, black-eyed visitors from Kiev, unable to distinguish between the vowels "a" and "o", and wealthy Siberians, contemptuous of all this Russian to-do, roamed up and down the beach, the skin on their noses peeling in the sun. Everyone basked and roasted themselves black in the sun—young women, long-limbed youths, priests, state employees, respectable married couples—all leading the demoralized lives that the whole of Russia was leading at that time, as if it no longer had any moral backbone.

By the middle of the summer the salt water, the heat, and their own sunburned skins had made all these people dead to shame, ordinary clothes now seemed a vulgar superfluity, and women began to appear on the sands barely covered by Tatar towels, while the men looked like drawings from Etruscan vases.

Domestic stability was menaced by a remarkable combination of blue waves, hot sands, and the naked bodies one was

continually stumbling over. Everything began to appear easy and possible here. As for subsequent reckonings in the tedious atmosphere of home, up North, with rain streaming down the windowpanes, the telephone ringing in the hall, and an incessant feeling of unfulfilled obligations—they could wait. The sea approached the shore with a soft rustling, gently touching one's feet, and a feeling of lightness, warmth and sweetness would creep over the body outstretched on the sands, the outflung arms, the closed lids. Everything, however perilous, was easy and sweet.

This summer the frivolity and demoralization of the visitors attained unprecedented proportions, as if some gigantic protuberance, escaping from the red-hot sun one morning in June, had stunned the memory and reasoning powers of the thousands of city-dwellers.

There was not a house on the whole shore in which all was well. The most solid ties were unexpectedly severed. The very air seemed to be full of amorous whisperings, tender laughter, and the indescribable nonsense spoken on this warm soil, strewn with the fragments of ancient towns and the bones of long-dead nations. It looked as if a general day of reckoning and bitter tears were in store with the autumn rains.

Dasha arrived at Eupatoria in the afternoon. Just as the dusty white ribbon of the road, winding past salt marshes and straw ricks over the even steppe approached the town, she caught sight of a great wooden ship, silhouetted against the sun. It seemed to be moving slowly over the wormwood-covered steppe, its black sails rigged fore and aft. The sight was so extraordinary that Dasha gasped. The Armenian seated next to her in the car said, smiling at her:

"You'll see the sea in a minute."

The car, rounding the rectangular reservoirs of a salt-works, climbed a sandy rising from which the sea was visible. It seemed to be tilted above the level of the ground, dark-blue, flecked with long crests of white foam. The breeze whistled merrily. Dasha tightened her grip on the leather suitcase in her lap, saying to herself: "This is it! Now it's coming!"

At that moment Nikolai Ivanovich Smokovnikov was seated in a pavilion built out over the sea on piles, drinking coffee with the stage lover. Here the summer visitors betook

themselves after dinner, sitting at the little tables, calling out to one another, discussing sea bathing and women, and the advantages of the iodine treatment. Inside the pavilion it was cool. The breeze fluttered the edges of the white tablecloths and the scarves of the women. A yacht with one sail floated by, gay cries issuing from it. Some Moscow visitors—world celebrities to a man—crowded in and occupied one of the biggest tables. The stage lover frowned at the sight of them, and went on relating the plot of the play he intended writing.

"I've worked out the theme thoroughly, but only the first act is written," he said, looking with lofty earnestness into Nikolai Ivanovich's face. "You're a clever chap, Kolya, you'll understand my idea—a beautiful young woman, grieving, languishing, and nothing but triviality all around her. Decent people, but sucked into life's whirlpool, spoilt by diseased emotions and by drink. You know what I mean. . . . And suddenly she says: 'I must go away, I must break away from this life, I must go somewhere, towards the light. . . .' And then there's the husband and the friend. . . . Both are suffering. You see what I mean, Kolya, sucked into life's whirlpool . . . she does go away, I don't say who she goes to . . . she has no lover, it's all a matter of moods . . . and then you see two men silently drinking in a café. Swallowing their tears with their brandy . . . and the wind in the chimney howls, chants at their funeral . . . and . . . hollow . . . dark. . . ."

"D'you want to know my opinion?" asked Nikolai Ivanovich.

"I do. You only have to say: 'Misha, give it up!' and I'll stop writing."

"Your play's wonderful. It's life itself," Nikolai Ivanovich nodded, closing his eyes.

"Yes, Misha, we were unable to appreciate our happiness, and it has vanished. And you and I—without hope or will—sit drinking. And the wind howls over our graves . . . your play moves me indescribably."

The loose skin beneath the eyes of the stage lover quivered; he reached over and kissed Nikolai Ivanovich heartily. Then he poured out a glass of wine for each of them. They touched glasses, planted their elbows on the table, and resumed their intimate conversation.

"Kolya," said the stage lover, glancing sombrely at his companion, "are you aware that I loved your wife this side of idolatory?"

"I thought you did."

"I went through agonies, Kolya. But you were my friend. . . . How many times have I rushed away from your house, vowing never again to cross the threshold. . . . But I went there again, and played the jester. . . . Kolya, don't you dare to blame her. . . ."

He thrust out his lips fiercely.

"She treated us cruelly, Misha."

"No doubt. . . . But we've treated her badly, all of us. . . . Oh, Kolya, there's just one thing I cannot understand—how could you, living with such a woman, at the same time get mixed up with that widow, Sophia Ivanovna. How could you?"

"It's all very complicated."

"Nonsense! I saw her—just a cow."

"You see, Misha—all that's over, now, of course—Sophia Ivanovna was just a good-natured woman. She gave me moments of joy and never asked anything of me. And at home everything was too complicated, too difficult, too deep. . . . I hadn't the spiritual force for Ekaterina Dmitrevna. . . ."

"But, Kolya, d'you mean to say. . . . We go back to Petersburg. . . . Tuesday comes round, and I go to your house after the play. . . . And your house is empty. . . . How am I to bear it? Listen. . . . Where's your wife now?"

"In Paris."

"Do you write?"

"No."

"Go to Paris. Let's go together!"

"It would be no good."

"Let's drink her health, Kolya!"

"We'll do that!"

Suddenly the actress Charodeyeva appeared in the pavilion, standing amidst the tables in a transparent green dress and great hat. She was thin and snaky, with blue shadows under her eyes, and she writhed and bent as if she had no backbone to keep her erect. The editor of *The Chorus of the Muses* rose to meet her, and, taking her hand, slowly kissed the bend of the elbow.



"Marvellous woman!" said Nikolai Ivanovich through his teeth.

"No, Kolya, she isn't! Charodeyeva is simply carrion. What do people see in her? Only that she lived with Bessonov three months, and wails out decadent poetry at concerts. . . . Just look at her—a mouth from ear to ear, and a stringy neck. She's not a woman, she's a hyena!"

But when Charodeyeva, the brim of her hat trembling as she bowed right and left, her big, pink mouth extended in a smile, drew nearer to their table, the stage lover rose slowly, as if fascinated, flung out his hands, and then clasped them beneath his chin:

"Nina. . . . Darling. . . . What a lovely get-up! I can't stand it! I've been prescribed complete rest, my love!"

Wrinkling up her nose. Charodeyeva pinched his cheek with a bony hand.

"And what did you say about me in the restaurant yesterday?"

"I said anything bad about you in the restaurant, yesterday? Oh, Nina!"

"Didn't you just!"

"I've been slandered, honour bright!"

Charodeyeva, laughing, touched his lips with her little finger—"You know very well I can't be angry with you for long."

And then, in quite a different voice, as if she were acting in a society comedy, she turned to Nikolai Ivanovich.

"I just passed your room. Somebody's come to see you—a relation, I believe—a charming girl."

Nikolai Ivanovich, casting a rapid glance at his friend, picked up a half-smoked cigar from the edge of his saucer and began puffing at it so violently that his whole beard was enveloped in clouds of smoke. "That's quite unexpected," he said. "What can it mean? I'll run and see."

Tossing the end of his cigar into the sea, he went down the steps to the shore, twirling a silver-headed walking stick, his hat on the back of his head. He was quite out of breath by the time he got to the hotel.

"Dasha! What brings you here? What's happened?" he asked, closing the door behind him. Dasha was seated on the floor beside her open suitcase, darning a stocking. When her brother-in-law entered she got up with leisurely move-

ments, offered her cheek for his kiss, and said in casual tones:

"Glad to see you! Papa and I think you ought to go to Paris. I've brought two letters from Katya. Here they are. I want you to read them."

Nikolai Ivanovich seized the letters and sat down beside the window. Dasha went to the dressing room from where, while changing her clothes, she could hear her brother-in-law rustling the sheets of paper and sighing. Then he fell silent. Dasha's senses were on the alert.

"Have you had breakfast?" he asked suddenly. "If you're hungry, come to the pavilion."

"He doesn't love her any more," she said to herself.

Using both hands, she settled her hat on her head, and determined to put off all talk about Paris till the morrow.

Nikolai Ivanovich said nothing on the way to the pavilion, walking with his eyes fixed on the ground, but when Dasha asked: "Do you bathe?" he raised his head cheerfully, and began to tell her about the "society for the abolition of bathing costumes" which had been got up, chiefly on hygienic grounds.

"Fancy, you absorb more iodine in a week, bathing from this beach, than could be taken internally. And in addition to that, you absorb the sun's rays and the heat from the sun-warmed sand. It's not so bad for us men—we only have to wear the narrowest of shorts, but women have to cover almost two thirds of their body. We've begun a determined campaign against this . . . on Sunday I'm giving a lecture on the subject."

They walked along the edge of the water over the yellow sand, soft and velvety, composed here of sea-shells crushed flat by the action of the sea. Not far from them, just where the small waves broke in frothing foam against a shoal, two girls in red bathing caps were bobbing up and down like floats.

"Our champions," said Nikolai Ivanovich briskly.

Dasha experienced a mounting feeling which was not exactly excitement, and not quite anxiety. It had started rising within her from the moment she had seen the black ship in the midst of the steppe.

She stood still, watching the thin film of water spread over the sand and withdraw, leaving rivulets behind it, and there

was something so joyful and eternal about the touch of the water on the land that Dasha could not resist squatting down and dabbling her fingers in it. A tiny, flat crab was scuttling along sideways, raising a miniature sandstorm as it disappeared into the depths of the water. The waves wet her hands up to the elbows.

"There's something different about you," said Nikolai Ivanovich, screwing up his eyes. "Either you've grown still prettier, or you're thinner, or it's time for you to be married."

Turning her head Dasha looked strangely at him and rose to her feet. Without drying her hands, she walked on towards the pavilion, where the stage lover was waving his straw hat to them.

They fed her on Tatar delicacies, and gave her champagne to drink; the stage lover fussed about, every now and then lapsing into a sort of stupor, and whispering to himself: "God—isn't she exquisite!" Then he would bring up certain youths to introduce to her—students from a theatrical studio, who spoke in muffled tones, as if in the confessional. Nikolai Ivanovich was gratified by the impression "his Dashenka" was making.

Dasha drank her wine, laughed, stretched out her hand to be kissed and never took her eyes off the radiant blue of the restless sea. "This is happiness," she said to herself.

After a day spent in bathing and walking, they went to have supper at the hotel, where all was noise, light and elegance. The stage lover spoke long and ardently about love. Nikolai Ivanovich, gazing at Dasha, drank himself into a melancholy mood. And all the time, through a chink between the drawn curtains, Dasha watched liquid flashes of light appearing from somewhere quite near, slipping away, and reappearing. At last she got up and went to the beach. The clear, full moon, looking like a stage setting for the tales of Scheherazade, flung a scaly path right across the ocean. Dasha enlaced the fingers of both hands, and cracked the joints.

Hearing the voice of Nikolai Ivanovich, she hastily walked away along the edge of the waves lapping drowsily against the shore. A woman's figure could be seen, sitting on the sand, beside her the figure of a man, resting his head on her

knees. In the dark purple water somebody's head was bobbing up and down between shimmering specks of light, and two eyes, with the moonlight reflected in them, stared at Dasha, following her for a long time as she walked. Next she came upon a couple, standing pressed against one another. As she passed them, Dasha could hear a sigh followed by the sound of kisses.

From the distance came cries of: "Dasha! Dasha!"

She sat down on the sand, her elbows on her knees, her chin propped on her hands. If at that moment Telegin had come up, sat down beside her, put his arm round her waist, and asked in a low, stern voice: "Are you mine?", Dasha would have replied: "I am."

From the other side of a sandy hillock a grey, supine figure stirred, sat up, with drooping head, and, with a long look at the path on which the moonbeams seemed to be dancing for the amusement of children, rose and strayed like a half-dead thing past Dasha, and Dasha, her heart beating frantically, recognized Bessonov.

It was thus that the last days of the old world began for Dasha. Joyous carefree days laden with the sultry heat of the waning summer—there were not many of them left. But people grown accustomed to the idea that the morrow would dawn as clear as the distant bluish mountains, were unable—not even the wisest and most perspicacious of them—to see anything beyond the present moment. Impenetrable gloom lay in waiting beyond this moment, suffused as it was with colour and scent, and throbbing with the sap of life. . . .

Not a single glance could penetrate this gloom, not a sensation nor a thought entered into it, and there were only a very few who, perhaps warned by the vague feelings known to animals before a storm, sensed what was in store. This feeling was akin to an indefinite anxiety. And all the time an invisible cloud, whirling furiously in a kind of triumphant frenzy, its outlines ragged and writhing, was waiting to descend upon the world. The only sign of this was a strip of livid shadow, extending from the southeast to the northwest, and blotting out the whole of the old gay, wicked life on earth.

Bessonov spent day after day lying on the beach. Peering into the faces around him—the faces of women, tanned and laughing, the faces of men, excited, burned to a copper-red,—he felt wearily that his heart was a mere lump of ice in his breast. Gazing on the sea, he told himself that its waves had been roaring against the shore for thousands of years. And this shore, which had once been a desert, was now covered with human beings; they would die, and the shore would be deserted again, but the sea would go on dashing against the sand just as before. Frowning over these thoughts, he would scrape some shells into a heap with his fingers, and thrust his burnt-out cigarette into the heap, after which he would go for a bathe, dine lazily, and go to bed.

Last night a girl had sat down on the sand not far from him, and gazed long at the moonlight; a faint smell of violets had emanated from her. A memory had stirred his sluggish brains. Turning, Bessonov had said to himself: "Leave that bait alone. . . . To hell. . . . Go to bed. . . .", and rising to his feet had wandered back to the hotel.

The encounter had alarmed Dasha. She had taken it for granted that the Petersburg life, with its restless nights and the strange fascination of Bessonov, were all over and done with.

But the single glance, the moment during which he had gone past her, darkly silhouetted against the moonlight, had been enough to bring everything back to her with renewed force; and it was no longer mere vague, undefinable emotions that she felt, now it was real desire, as burning as noonday heat. She longed to *feel* this man. Not to love him, not to torture herself, not to hesitate—just to feel him.

Seated in the white, moonlit room, on her white bed, she exclaimed feebly over and over again: "My God, my God! What *is* the matter with me?"

The next morning, before seven, Dasha went to the beach, took off her clothes, went into the water up to her knees, and stopped, fascinated. The sea was a pale, faded blue, just touched here and there by pearly ripples. It kept rising gently over her knees, and as gently falling below them. Dasha stretched out her arms, threw herself upon this divine coolness, and began to swim. A little later, refreshed and

salty, she wrapped her robe of Turkish towelling around her, and lay down on the sand, which was already warm.

"I love no one but Ivan Ilyich," she told herself, laying her cheek on her arm, which smelt cool and fresh, "I love Ivan Ilyich, I love him. He makes me feel clean and fresh and joyful. Thank God I love Ivan Ilyich. I'll marry him."

She closed her eyes and went to sleep, feeling as if the sea in its motion was breathing to the rhythm of her own pulses. It was a sweet sleep. All the time she was conscious of the warm lightness with which her body lay on the sand. And as she slept an extraordinary tenderness for herself overcame her.

The same day at sunset, when the sun was descending in a flat disc into a cloudless orange glow, Dasha came upon Bessonov, sitting on a rock beside the path which wound its way across a flat expanse of wormwood. Her walk had led her here, and when she saw Bessonov, she halted, and would have turned and run, but her habitual lightness had deserted her, and her legs had grown heavy, as if they had taken root, so that she could only watch his approach from beneath lowering brows. He showed no sign of surprise at the encounter, as he raised his straw hat, bowing humbly, almost piously.

"I wasn't mistaken last night, then, Darya Dmitrevna. It was you on the beach."

"Yes, it was me."

He lowered his eyes in silence, and then, looking beyond Dasha into the darkling plain, he said:

"One feels as if one were in a desert in this field at sunset. Hardly anyone comes here. All round is nothing but the wormwood and the rocks and it's easy to imagine, in the twilight, that there's no one left on the earth any more."

Bessonov laughed, slowly exposing his white teeth. Dasha darted a wild, birdlike glance at him. Then she walked along the path beside him. At their side the high, pungent-smelling bushes of wormwood stretched all over the field; each bush cast a faint shadow in front of it on the dry earth. Two bats, clearly visible against the sunset, flitted over their heads, rising and sinking with fluttering jerky movements.

"Temptations, temptations, there's no escaping them," said Bessonov. "They lure, they entice, and once again you are the victim of illusions. See how artfully it's all arranged." He pointed with his stick to the low-hanging globe of the

moon. "All night it will weave webs, the path will pretend to be a stream, every bush will seem inhabited, even a corpse would appear beautiful, and any woman's face—mysterious. And perhaps that's how it should be; perhaps the whole of wisdom lies in this very illusion. . . . How fortunate you are, Darya Dmitrevna, oh, how fortunate!"

"Why is it illusion? I don't think it's illusion a bit. It's just-moonlight," said Dasha obstinately.

"But of course it is, Darya Dmitrevna! Of course it is! 'Except ye become as little children.' The illusion comes in because I don't believe any of it. 'Be ye therefore wise as serpents.' And how to reconcile the two? How is it to be done? They say love reconciles everything. What do you think?"

"I don't know. I never think about it."

"From what regions does love come? How is it to be lured hither? With what words can it be conjured up? Should one lie down in the dust and howl: 'O, God, do send me some love!'"

He laughed softly, showing his teeth.

"I'm not going any further," said Dasha. "I want to go to the sea."

They turned and made for the sandy dunes, walking over the wormwood now. Suddenly Bessonov said, in a low, diffident voice:

"I remember every word you said to me that time, in Petersburg. I frightened you away." (Dasha walked on rapidly, staring straight in front of her.) "I was absorbed in a single sensation. . . . It wasn't so much your beauty. . . . No, I was struck, penetrated by the indescribable music of your voice. I kept looking at you and thinking: 'This is my salvation—to give my heart to her, to become a beggar, to humble myself, to melt in her light . . . or, perhaps, to win her heart . . . to become infinitely rich. . . .' You see, Darya Dmitrevna, by coming here, you have given me a riddle to solve!"

Dasha, walking ahead of him, ran up a sand dune. The broad path lying in shimmering scales on the vast expanse of water came to an end where sea and sky met in a long strip of light, above which there hovered a dark radiance. Dasha's heart beat so fiercely that she had to close her eyes. "Oh, God, save me from him!" she said to herself. Bessonov poked his stick several times into the sand.

"The time has come to make a decision, Darya Dmitrevna . . . one of us must be consumed in this flame . . . which of us is it to be? You...? I...? Think about it, and then give me your answer."

"I don't understand," said Dasha abruptly.

"Only when you become a beggar, wasted, consumed away, will real life begin for you, Darya Dmitrevna. Without any moonlight, or cheap lure. Then wisdom will be yours. And all that is required is for you to cast aside the girdle of your virginity."

Bessonov took Dasha's hand in his icy one, and gazed into her eyes. Dasha could only remain silent, slowly closing her eyes. After a few endless moments of silence, he continued:

"Perhaps after all the best thing would be for us each to go home to bed. We've talked, we've discussed the problem in all its aspects—besides it's late."

He accompanied Dasha to the hotel, took a courteous leave of her, pushed his hat on the back of his head, and began walking along beside the sea, peering at the indistinct forms of passers-by. Suddenly he stopped, turned round, and approached a tall woman standing motionless, wrapped in a white shawl. Throwing his stick across his shoulders, and holding it there by a hand at each end, he said:

"Hullo, Nina!"

"Hullo!"

"What are you doing all by yourself on the beach?"

"Just standing here."

"Why are you alone?"

"Because I am," replied Charodeyeva in a low, angry voice.

"Surely you're not still angry with me?"

"No, my dear. I got over it long ago."

"Nina, come to me."

Throwing her head back she maintained a prolonged silence, breaking it to say in a tremulous, indistinct voice:

"Are you mad?"

"Didn't you know that?"

He took her by the arm, but she tore herself away with a violent movement, and walked slowly beside him past the reflections of moonlight on the oily-black water.

The next morning Nikolai Ivanovich waked Dasha by knocking cautiously at her door.



"Get up, Dasha, there's a dear, and come and have coffee."

Dasha let her legs down over the side of the bed, and looked at her shoes and stockings—they were covered with grey dust. Something had happened. Or had it been that frightful dream again? No it was something worse than a dream. Dasha threw on her clothes, and ran out for a bathe.

But the water tired her, and the sun scorched her. Seated on the sand in her bath robe, her arms round her raised knees, she told herself that nothing good could ever happen here.

"I have neither brains nor pluck nor perseverance. My imagination is inflated. I don't know myself what I want. I want one thing in the morning, another in the evening—the very type I most detest."

Dasha gazed at the sea with her head drooping. Everything seemed so sad and uncertain that the tears welled up in her eyes.

"And what is this treasure that I have to cherish! Who wants it? Not a single soul! There's no one I really love. After all, perhaps he's right—better to burn up everything, to be quite consumed, and become a sober person. He asked me to come—what if I were to go to him this very evening—oh, no!"

Feeling hot all over, Dasha let her head sink on to her knees. It was obvious that this dual existence could not go on. One way or another some deliverance must offer itself from the burden of a virginity which had become intolerable. Anything—even disaster—would be better!

"Supposing I go away!" she mused in her dejection. "Back to Father. To the dust. To the flies. . . . Stick it out till the autumn. Term begins. I work twelve hours a day. I wither up and become a fright. I learn the whole of international law by heart. . . . Wear flannel petticoats. The esteemed spinster lawyer, Bulavina. A very sensible way out, of course!"

Shaking the grains of sand off her skin, Dasha went back to the house. Nikolai Ivanovich, clad in silk pyjamas, was sprawling in a rocker on the balcony, reading a banned novel by Anatole France. Dasha perched on the arm of his chair, and said pensively, swinging one foot, the slipper dangling from the end of her toes.

"You and I were to have a talk about Katya."

"Oh, yes!"

"You see, Nikolai, life is very difficult for a woman. Even at nineteen one doesn't know what to do with oneself."

"At your age, Dashenka, one should live life to the hilt, without thinking too much about it. Too much thinking won't land you anywhere. You've become awfully pretty, you know!"

"I knew you'd say that! It's no good talking to you, Nikolai. You're so tactless, you always say the wrong thing. That's why Katya left you."

Nikolai Ivanovich laughed, laid his book on his stomach, and put his plump hands behind his head.

"When it begins to rain, the birdie will fly home of its own accord. Remember how she used to preen her feathers? In spite of all I'm very fond of Katya. Anyhow, now we're quits."

"So that's how you talk now! If I'd been in Katya's place I'd have treated you just the same."

And she moved away in annoyance to the railing.

"When you're older you'll realize that it is both foolish and harmful to take the ups and downs of life too seriously," said Nikolai Ivanovich. "You Bulavins are all the same—you make everything seem so complicated. You should be simpler, closer to nature. . . ."

He sighed and fell silent, examining his fingernails. A perspiring schoolboy on a bicycle passed on his way back from the post office, where he had gone to fetch the letters.

"I'll go as a village schoolteacher," said Dasha moodily.

"You'll *what*?" exclaimed Nikolai Ivanovich.

Dasha went to her own room without replying. There were two letters for her. One from Katya, one from her father.

"I send you a letter from Katya," wrote her father. "I've read it, and I don't like it a bit. But of course you must do as you please. Everything's the same here. It's very hot. What else? Oh, yes, Semyon Semyonovich Govyadin got a beating from hoodlums in the municipal gardens yesterday, but what for, he won't say. That's all our news. Oh, yes, a postcard came for you from Telegin, or someone, but I've mislaid it. I think he's in the Crimea, too, but I'm not quite sure."

Dasha perused these last lines with the utmost attention, and her heart suddenly began to beat violently. She fairly

stamped with vexation. "How delightful! 'I think he is in the Crimea, too, but I'm not quite sure!'"

What an appalling person her father was—so careless, so selfish! She crumpled up his letter, and sat long at her desk, her chin propped on her fist. Then she turned to Katya's letter.

"You remember I wrote to you, Dasha, about a man who followed me everywhere. Last night he came and sat beside me in the Luxembourg Gardens. At first I was frightened, but I didn't get up. Then he said to me: 'I've been shadowing you, I know your name and all about you. And then I had a great misfortune—I fell in love with you.' I looked at him, sitting there, so grand, with his stern face, so dark and sallow. 'You needn't be afraid of me,' he said. 'I'm an old man, a solitary. I have angina pectoris, I might die any minute. And now this misfortune!' A tear trickled down his cheek. Then, shaking his head, he said: 'Oh, what a sweet, sweet face you have!' I said: 'Please don't keep following me about!' I meant to go away, but I felt sorry for him, and stayed and talked to him. He listened to me, his eyes closed, and shook his head. And just fancy, Dasha, today I got a letter from some woman, the concierge where he lives, I think. She informs me 'on his instructions,' that he died last night. . . . It was terrible! And now, too, I've been looking out of the window at the millions of lights in the street, and the carriages rolling by, and the people threading their way through the trees. It's been raining, and now there's a fog. And it seems to me that all this belongs to the past, that everything is dead; those people are dead, and I seem to be looking at things that no longer exist—I don't see what I am standing and looking at, I only know that it's all over and done with. I think I must be ill. Sometimes I lie and cry over my wasted life. It may not have been anything special, but still there was happiness of a sort, there were people I loved. . . . And nothing is left of it all. And my heart has become dry and withered. I'm sure there is some great grief in store, Dasha, and all as a punishment for the evil life we led."

Dasha showed this letter to Nikolai Ivanovich.

He sighed while reading it, and then began saying how he had always felt guilty about Katya.

"I could see our way of living was all wrong—that all this pleasure-seeking was bound to end in an explosion of des-

pair some time or other. But what could I do, when the whole business of our life—mine, Katya's, that of everyone around us—was enjoyment? Sometimes I look at the sea, and think to myself: somewhere a Russia exists which tills the soil, pastures cattle, hews coal, weaves, hammers, builds, and people exist to compel it to do all this, but we, the intellectual aristocracy of the country, are mere onlookers, we have not the slightest contacts with this Russia which supports us. We are just butterflies. That is our tragedy. Supposing I, for instance, were to try and grow vegetables, or some other useful thing—nothing would come of it. I am doomed to flutter about like a butterfly to the end of my days. Oh, I know we do write books, make speeches, go in for politics, but all that is mere pastime, even when it is done at the behest of conscience. This incessant pleasure-hunting created spiritual havoc in Katya. It could not be otherwise. . . . If you only knew what a sweet, kind, tender creature she used to be! I spoiled her, corrupted her. . . . Yes, you're right, I must go to her."

It was decided that they would both go to Paris, at once, as soon as they could get their passports. After dinner Nikolai Ivanovich went to the town, and Dasha began to alter her straw hat for the journey, but only managed to spoil it, and ended up by giving it to the chambermaid. Then she wrote a letter to her father, and when dusk fell, lay down on her bed, suddenly overcome with fatigue; her cheek on the palm of her hand, she listened to the sound of the sea, which seemed to be going further and further away, becoming ever more soothing as it retreated.

Then it seemed to her that someone was leaning over her, that someone had pushed a lock of hair from her face and was kissing her eyelids, her cheeks, the corners of her lips—kisses light as breath. The sweetness of these kisses spread throughout her being. Gradually Dasha woke up. Through the open window could be seen a few solitary stars, and the breeze fluttered the sheets of the letter. And then a figure appeared at the window, leaned its elbows on the sill outside, and looked at Dasha.

Now thoroughly awake, she sat up and put her hand on her bosom, where her dress was unfastened.

"What d'you want?" she asked almost inaudibly.

The man at the window answered in Bessonov's voice:

"I've been waiting for you on the beach. Why didn't you come? Are you afraid?"

After a moment's silence, Dasha said:

"Yes."

At this he clambered over the window sill, pushed the table out of the way, and approached the bed.

"I've had a terrible night—I was ready to hang myself. Have you the least little bit of feeling for me?"

Dasha shook her head, but did not open her lips.

"Look here, Darya Dmitrevna, it's got to be, you know—if not today, then tomorrow, or a year hence. I can't go on living without you! Don't destroy all semblance of humanity in me."

He spoke in a low, husky voice, coming right up to Dasha. Suddenly she drew a short, deep breath and looked fixedly into his face.

"All I said yesterday was lies. I suffer cruelly. I'm haunted by your image. Be my wife!"

He bent over Dasha, inhaling her perfume, placing his hand behind her neck, and pressing his lips on hers. Dasha tried to push him away, but her wrists bent under the strain. Then a peaceful thought penetrated her stupor: "This is what I have been fearing and desiring, but it's as bad as murder. . . ." Turning her face aside, she could hear Bessonov, who smelled of spirits, muttering words into her ear. And Dasha said to herself: "That's just the way he was with Katya." And suddenly her whole being was filled with a sobering chill, the smell of spirits became stronger, the muttering more loathsome.

"Let me go!" she said, pushing him away violently, and making for the door. She had at last managed to fasten her dress at the neck.

This drove Bessonov into a fury: seizing Dasha by the hands he drew her towards him and began kissing her throat. Her lips compressed, she struggled in silence. When at last he managed to lift her up and carry her, she muttered rapidly:

"Never! Not even to save your life!"

Struggling with all her might, she freed herself, and stood against the wall. Still breathing heavily, he sank on to a chair and sat motionless. Dasha passed her hand over the traces of his fingers.

"I shouldn't have hurried you," said Bessonov.

"You make me sick," she answered.

At this, he leaned his head against the back of the chair.

"You're mad," said Dasha. "Go away. . . ."

She repeated this several times. Understanding at last, he rose and clambered heavily and awkwardly out of the window. Dasha closed the shutters and fell to pacing up and down the dark room. She could not get to sleep all night.

Towards morning Nikolai Ivanovich shuffled up to the door on his bare feet and asked in a drowsy voice:

"Have you got toothache, Dasha?"

"No."

"Then what was the noise in the night?"

"I don't know."

"Extraordinary!" he muttered, and went away. Dasha could neither sit nor lie down. She could do nothing but pace up and down, from window to door and back again, in the endeavour to stifle her self-disgust, excruciating as toothache. She told herself it would have been better if she had let Bessonov have his way. And it was with a desperate pain that she remembered the white steamer, flooded with sunlight, and how, later, the abandoned lover in the aspen grove had cooed that Dasha was in love, and how its cooing had been all lies. Glancing at the bed, turning white in the dawn, that terrible place on which such a short time ago, a human visage had been turned into a bestial mask, Dasha felt she would not be able to live with this consciousness. She was ready to undergo any torture rather than this feeling of disgust. Her head was burning and there seemed to be cobwebs over her face, her neck, her whole body, which she would have given anything to be able to tear away.

Now it was the unmistakable light of day which was streaming through the chinks in the shutters. In the house, doors were banged, and a ringing voice exclaimed: "Matryosha! Bring some water. . . ." Nikolai Ivanovich woke up and could be heard through the wall cleaning his teeth. Dasha splashed her face with water, and went on to the beach, pulling her cap well over her brows. The sea was like milk, the sand dampish. There was a smell of seaweed. Dasha turned into the field and wandered along the road.

A cart with wicker sides, drawn by one horse, was approaching her from the opposite direction, its wheels rais-

ing clouds of dust. The driver was a Tatar, his passenger, a broad-shouldered man in a white suit. Glancing at him, Dasha thought to herself sleepily—the bright light, and her weariness, made it hard to keep her eyes open—"Another good, happy person—well, and what if he is good and happy!", and she moved out of the path. A startled voice suddenly came from the cart:

"Darya Dmitrevna!"

Someone jumped on to the ground and started running. At the sound of this voice Dasha's heart gave a jump, and her knees began to wobble. She turned. Telegin was running up to her, sunburnt, agitated, blue-eyed, and so unexpectedly dear that Dasha put her hands impetuously on his chest, pressed her face against him, and began to sob loudly like a child.

Telegin held her firmly round the shoulders. When Dasha attempted in a broken voice to falter out some explanation, he said:

"Never mind, Darya Dmitrevna, never mind... afterwards. It doesn't matter."

The front of his linen jacket was wet with Dasha's tears. She felt much better now.

"Were you coming to us?" she asked.

"Yes, I've come to say goodbye, Darya Dmitrevna. I only heard yesterday that you were here, and I wanted to say goodbye to you..."

"Goodbye?"

"I've been called up—it can't be helped."

"Called up?"

"D'you mean to say you haven't heard!"

"Heard what?"

"It's war, that's what it is."

Dasha looked at him, blinked, and still did not understand.

#### \* XIV \*

An emergency editorial meeting was being held in the office of the editor of *The People's Word*, the great liberal newspaper, and, since the use of spirituous liquors had been legally prohibited the day before, brandy and rum, contrary to custom, graced the editorial tea.

The burly, bearded liberals sat smoking in deep arm-chairs. They were completely at a loss. The younger contributors sat about on window sills and on the famous leather-covered sofa, the bulwark of the opposition, concerning which a certain well-known writer had tactlessly declared that it harboured bugs.

The editor, grey-haired and rosy-cheeked, who cultivated an English manner, was deliberately enunciating, a word at a time, one of his famous speeches, intended to give—and, in fact, giving—a lead to the entire liberal press.

"...The complexity of our task consists in the necessity, while not budging an inch from our opposition to the tsarist power, of extending a helping hand to this power in the face of the danger menacing the sovereignty of the Russian State. Our gesture must be frank and sincere. The question of the culpability of the tsarist government in drawing Russia into war is at the moment of secondary importance. We must first win, then judge the culprits. While we are sitting here talking, gentlemen, a bloody battle is going on at Krasnostav, where our guards have been sent to fill up the breach in our front. The issue of this battle is as yet unknown, but it must be borne in mind that Kiev is in danger. It goes without saying that the war cannot last more than three or four months, and whatever its outcome, we must be able to say to the tsarist government, our heads held high: 'in your hour of peril we were with you, now we have come to call you to account!'"

Belosvetov, an authority on Zemstvo questions, and one of the oldest members of the editorial staff, unable to contain himself any longer, exclaimed in frenzied tones:

"It's the tsarist government that is fighting, why should we extend a hand towards it? I can't for the life of me see! The most elementary logic should teach us to keep out of this hazardous adventure, thus giving a lead to the whole of the intelligentsia. Let the tsars break their necks—it will only be to our advantage."

"Yes, it certainly goes against the grain to extend a hand to Nikolai the Second, say what you will, gentlemen," muttered Alfa, one of the paper's leader writers, at the same time selecting a cake from the dish. "It's enough to make one's blood run cold...."



Immediately there was a babble of voices:

"There are not, and never can be, conditions compelling us to make a compromise...."

"What is this, I ask you—capitulation?"

"Is the entire progressive movement to come to an ignominious end?"

"I should like somebody to explain to me the aims of this war, gentlemen!"

"Wait till the Germans give us a good beating—you'll know then!"

"Aha, my friend—so you're a nationalist!"

"I simply don't want to be beaten."

"It's not you who'll be beaten—it's Nikolai the Second."

"Excuse me! And how about Poland? And Volhynia? And Kiev?"

"The more we are beaten, the sooner the revolution will come."

"I am not willing to give up Kiev for any revolution of yours...."

"Pyotr Petrovich, for shame!"

The editor, with difficulty restoring order, explained that the military censor had been empowered, by a circular on martial law, to close down the newspaper for the slightest hint of an attack on the government, and thus the embryonic freedom of speech, in the struggle for which so much energy had been expended, would be destroyed.

"I would therefore suggest that this worthy assembly arrive at an acceptable point of view. For my part, I venture to express what may seem the paradoxical opinion that we must accept this war in its entirety, with all its consequences. We cannot afford to lose sight of the fact that the war is extremely popular. In Moscow it has been called the Second Patriotic War." He smiled subtly and looked down. "The emperor was accorded a reception which bordered on the enthusiastic in Moscow. Mobilization is proceeding among the common people better than could have possibly been expected...."

"Vasili Vasilievich, are you serious?" exclaimed Belosvetov, his voice now positively plaintive. "You know you're destroying our whole philosophy.... Go to the help of the government? And what about Russia's ten thousand best

people rotting in Siberia? And the firing on workers? Why, the stones are still wet with their blood. . . ."

All this was very lofty and noble, but everyone understood that there was no escape from coming to terms with the government, and so, when the proofs of a leader beginning with the words: "In the face of the German invasion we must close up our ranks in a united front" were brought in from the printing room, the meeting perused the galleys in a silence broken by stifled sighs and the smothered, significant exclamation: "So this is what we have come to!" Belosvetov fastened every button of his ash-flecked black frock coat with spasmodic movements, but he did not leave and only sat down in his armchair again. And the current issue came out with the headlines: "The Fatherland Is in Danger. To Arms!"

The hearts of all were filled with confusion and alarm. It was hard for the editorial staff to conceive how the stable peace of Europe could have been blown sky-high in twenty-four hours, while humane European civilization, in the name of which *The People's Word* had daily arraigned the government and goaded the conscience of the public, had turned out to be a mere house of cards. Men had invented printing and discovered electricity, they even had radium now, but when the hour struck, the bestial, hirsute savage, armed with a club, had emerged from behind the starched shirt front. This was a bitter pill for the intelligentsia to swallow.

The meeting ended in gloomy silence. Venerable writers went to lunch at Cubat's, while the younger men gathered in the news editor's room. It was decided to carry out detailed investigations into the mood prevailing among the most varied sections of the population. Antoshka Arnoldov was to look into the working of the military censorship. There and then, he demanded an advance, and rolled along Nevsky Prospekt in a rubber-tired droshky to the General Staff.

Solntsev, a colonel from the General Staff, head of the press section, received Antoshka Arnoldov in his office and listened to him courteously, looking into his face with clear, cheerful, prominent eyes. Antoshka had prepared himself for meeting some legendary hero, some ruddy-complexioned, leonine general, the scourge of the free press, but before him was a smart, well-bred gentleman, who neither shouted at

him in a hoarse bass, nor showed the least desire to scourge and oppress. This did not chime with the accepted idea of a tsarist hireling.

"And so, Colonel, we trust you will not refuse to throw the light of your authoritative opinion on the questions I have raised," said Arnoldov, glancing obliquely at the full-length portrait of Nikolai I, whose inexorable eyes seemed to be summing up the representative of the press: "Short jacket, brown boots, perspiring nose, a pitiable appearance. You're afraid, son-of-a-bitch!"

"Of course I do not for a moment doubt," continued Arnoldov, "that by the New Year the Russian troops will be in Berlin, but our paper is chiefly interested in certain specific questions. . . ."

Colonel Solntsev interrupted him courteously.

"It appears to me that Russian public opinion is insufficiently aware of the magnitude of the present war. Naturally I can only welcome your splendid desire for the entry of our glorious troops into Berlin, but I fear it may be harder to do this than you anticipate. For my part I consider that the most important mission of the press at the present moment is to accustom public opinion to the idea of the very grave danger threatening our State, and the extraordinary sacrifices we shall all have to make."

Antoshka Arnoldov lowered his notebook and looked in astonishment at the colonel.

"We did not seek this war," continued Solntsev, "and at the moment we are merely defending ourselves. The Germans have more artillery than we have, and a greater concentration of railway communications at their frontiers. We shall, nevertheless, do all that is possible to prevent the enemy from crossing our frontiers. The Russian troops are performing the duty imposed upon them. It would, however, be extremely desirable for the public to be similarly alive to the idea of its duty towards the fatherland." Solntsev's brows shot up. "I realize that the feeling of patriotism is somewhat complicated in certain circles. But the danger is so grave that I feel sure all disputes and grudges will be postponed until a more propitious moment. Not even in 1812\* did the Russian Empire face such danger. That is all I would

\* The war of 1812 against Napoleon is referred to.

have you note. It will, moreover, be necessary to make it known that the military hospitals at the disposal of the government are insufficient to accommodate all the wounded. In this respect also, therefore, the public must be ready with extensive assistance. . . ."

"Excuse me, Colonel, but I should like to know how many casualties may be expected."

Once more Solntsev's eyebrows shot up.

"As far as I can see, from two hundred and fifty, to three hundred thousand wounded in the next few weeks."

Arnoldov gulped, wrote down the figures, and asked, still more deferentially:

"And how many killed are to be expected?"

"We usually reckon from five to ten per cent of wounded."

"I see—thanks!"

Solntsev rose, Antoshka pressed his hand quickly, colliding in the doorway with Atlant, a shabby, consumptive newspaperman, in a crumpled jacket. Atlant had actually had nothing to drink for nearly two days.

"I've come to you about the war, Colonel," said Atlant, trying to cover the front of his grubby shirt with his hand. "Well—how are things going? Shall we soon take Berlin?"

Arnoldov came out of the General Staff into Palace Square, put on his hat, and stood there for some time, screwing up his eyes.

"War to a victorious finish," he muttered through his teeth. "Hold on, you old-timers, we'll show you what 'defeatism' means!"

Some clumsy bearded peasants were moving about in groups across the vast, cleanly-swept square, with the heavy granite Alexander Column in the middle of it. Sharp orders rang out every now and then. The peasants lined up, obeying the command, now to run, now to lie down; in one place about fifty men rose from the pavement with discordant shouts of "Hurrah!" and started off at a stumbling trot. "Halt! Attention! You dogs—you sons-of-bitches!" yelled a hoarse voice, shouting them down. From another place could be heard the words: "Go right up and stick him in the body. If you break your bayonet, use the butt!"

Just such ragged peasants with fan-shaped beards, in blouses and bast shoes, with the sweat drying in patches on the backs of their blouses, had come to these marshy shores

some two hundred years ago to build a city. Now they had been summoned to prop the tottering pillars of the empire with their shoulders.

Antoshka turned into Nevsky Prospekt, thinking all the time about his article. In the middle of the street, with fifes wailing like an autumn wind, marched two companies in full marching array, equipped with kitbags, canteens, and spades. The broad faces of the soldiers were weary and dust-grimed. A little officer in a green tunic with brand-new straps crossed over it, kept rising to the tips of his toes, turning his head and rolling his eyes. "Left, right! Left, right!" Nevsky Prospekt, gay, sparkling with carriages and plate glass, emitted a dreamy hum. "Left, right! Left, right!" The docile, heavy-limbed peasants followed the little officer in a swaying line. They were overtaken by a carriage drawn by a fiery black horse, covered with foam. The broad-backed coachman reined in the horse, and a beautiful lady, rising in the carriage to have a look at the soldiers as they passed, made the sign of the cross over them with her white-gloved hand.

The soldiers marched on, and were soon hidden by the stream of carriages. It was hot on the overcrowded pavements, and everyone seemed to be waiting for something to happen. Passers-by would suddenly come to a stop, listening to snatches of talk and disjointed cries, squeezing past each other, asking questions, moving in excitement from one group to another.

The disorderly traffic gradually acquired direction, the crowds turning from Nevsky Prospekt to Morskaya Street, where they overflowed into the road. In front of them ran a few stunted-looking men, silent and preoccupied. Caps were thrown up at street corners, umbrellas shaken. Morskaya Street hummed with cries of hurrah. Boys whistled shrilly. Everywhere were carriages drawn up, with well-dressed women standing in them. The crowd poured helter-skelter into Isakievsky Square, spreading all over it, and squeezing through the railings. There were people everywhere—at windows, on roofs, on the stone steps of the Cathedral. And all these thousands of people were staring at the puffs of smoke coming from the upper windows of the ponderous, dark-red building of the German Embassy. Through broken windowpanes people could be seen running

to and fro, and flinging into the crowd bundles of paper, which flew in all directions and sank slowly. A roar surged over the crowd at each fresh burst of smoke, at each object thrown from a window. And right in front of the house, with its two bronze giants holding the bridles of bronze horses, there reappeared the stunted-looking, preoccupied fellows. The crowd fell silent, listening to the metallic sounds of blows from hammers. The giant on the right side tottered and crashed on to the pavement. The crowd yelled. People rushed up from all directions, till there was a terrific crush. "Into the Moika with them! Into the Moika with the devils!" The other statue fell, too. A stout lady wearing pince-nez seized Antoshka Arnoldov by the shoulder, and shouted in his ear: "We'll drown them all, young man!" The crowd moved in the direction of the Moika. The bugles of the fire engines were heard, and brass helmets gleamed in the distance. Mounted police appeared from round the corner. And suddenly, amidst all this running, shouting crowd, Arnoldov caught sight of a man, bare-headed, deathly pale, with motionless, glassy, wide-open eyes. Recognizing Bessonov, he went up to him.

"Were you there?" Bessonov asked. "I heard them killing someone."

"Has there been a murder? Who's been killed?"

"I don't know."

Bessonov turned and staggered across the square like a blind man. What was left of the crowd now ran in scattered groups towards Nevsky Prospekt, where the Reiter Café was being sacked.

In the evening, Antoshka Arnoldov stood at a high desk in one of the newspaper's smoke-filled offices, covering narrow slips of paper as fast as he could write:

"... We have witnessed today the scope and beauty of the people's wrath. It should be noted that not a single bottle of wine was drunk in the cellars of the German Embassy—all were broken and poured into the Moika. Compromise is out of the question. We will fight to a victorious finish—at whatever sacrifice to ourselves. The Germans counted on catching Russia napping, but at the thunderous words: 'The Fatherland is in danger!', the people rose like one man. Their wrath will be a fearful thing. Fatherland is a powerful, but a forgotten word among us. At the first shot from Ger-

man guns it came to life in all its virginal beauty, and is flaming in letters of fire in the heart of each of us...."

Antoshka closed his eyes, his blood freezing. The words it had fallen to him to write! How different from what he had written a fortnight ago, when he had been commissioned to write up summer entertainments. He recalled a man who had come on to the stage of the Bouffe, dressed up to look like a pig and singing:

*I'm a pigling, and see no shame  
To own that pigling is my name.  
My mother was a dear old sow,  
They say I'm very like her now.*

"...We are entering upon a heroic era. We have been rotting alive long enough. The war is our purification," wrote Antoshka, his pen spluttering.

Despite opposition from the defeatists, led by Belosvetov, Arnoldov's article was published.

The article was relegated to page three, and given the innocuous title: "In Wartime," but this was the only concession to the paper's former traditions. Letters from readers came pouring in immediately—some expressing enthusiastic appreciation of the article, others bitterly ironical. But the enthusiastic ones were the more numerous ones. Antoshka's rates per line were raised, and a week later he was called to the office of the editor-in-chief, where Vasili Vasilievich himself, grey-haired, rosy-cheeked, smelling of English eau de Cologne, offered him a chair, and said earnestly:

"You must go to the country."

"Yes, Sir."

"We've got to know what the peasants think and say." He smote a big bundle of letters with the palm of his hand. "An enormous interest in the countryside has sprung up among the intellectuals. You must give us a living, first-hand idea of this sphinx."

"The results of mobilization point to a vast patriotic uplift, Vasili Vasilievich."

"I know that. But where the hell is it coming from? Go anywhere you like, keep your ears open, ask questions. I shall expect five hundred lines of rural impressions from you by Saturday."

From the newspaper office, Arnoldov went to Nevsky Prospekt where he bought himself a travelling suit of military cut, brown leggings, and a peaked cap. Changing into this new attire, he went to lunch at Donon's restaurant where he drank a whole bottle of champagne, and came to the decision that the simplest thing would be to go to the village of Khlibi, where Elizaveta Kievna was staying with her brother Kii. That evening he took his place in the sleeping car, lit a cigar, and said to himself, glancing at his virilely squeaking brown leggings: "This is the life!"

The village of Khlibi, with upwards of sixty homesteads, back yards full of gooseberry bushes, streets lined with ancient lime trees, a school on a hill (once the residence of the landowner), extended over low-lying ground between a swamp and the river Svinukha. The village lands were small, the earth was barren, and out of season most of the peasants went to Moscow to look for work.

The first thing that struck Antoshka when the cart had brought him to the village towards evening, was the utter stillness. The only sounds were the clucking of a foolish hen escaping from under the horse's hoofs, the barking of an old dog under a barn, and the thump-thump of linen being beaten on the riverbank. In the middle of the street, two rams were butting at one another, their horns clashing.

Antoshka paid off the deaf ancient who had driven him from the station, and followed the path to where the old log front of the school showed through the foliage of birch trees. On the rotting steps of the porch sat the schoolmaster Kii Kievich, engaged in leisurely conversation with Elizaveta Kievna. Beneath them the elongated shadows of enormous willow trees lay over the fields. Starlings, advancing and receding, flew in a dark cloud overhead. Far away could be heard the horn calling the cattle home. A few red cows emerged from the reeds, one lifting its head and mooing. Kii Kievich, who was very like his sister, with the same curiously outlined eyes, was saying, chewing a grass stalk:

"In the sexual sphere, too, you're absolutely unorganized, Liza. Types like you are the sickening waste matter of bourgeois culture."

Elizaveta Kievna, smiling lazily, fixed her eyes on a spot in the meadow where grass and shadows were turning a warm yellow in the light of the setting sun.



"It's frightfully boring to hear you talk, Kii. You seem to have learned it all by heart—to you everything seems clear, like in a book."

"We should always strive to set our ideas in order, Liza, to systematize them, and not care whether what we say is boring or not."

"All right, go on striving, then."

It was a calm evening. The drooping branches of birch trees made a motionless transparent screen in front of the porch. A corn-crake was uttering its rasping note at the foot of the hill. Kii Kievich went on chewing his grass stalk. Elizaveta Kievna gazed dreamily at the trees melting into the blue dusk. Suddenly a brisk little man with a suitcase appeared between them.

"There she is!" exclaimed Antoshka. "Hullo, Liza, my beauty!"

Elizaveta Kievna was unutterably glad to see him. She rose impetuously, and flung her arms around him.

Kii Kievich greeted him briefly, and went on chewing his grass stalk. Antoshka sprawled over the steps and lit a cigar.

"I've come to you for information, Kii Kievich. I want you to tell me in the utmost detail what people think and say about the war here in Khlibi. . . ."

Kii Kievich gave a wry smile.

"The devil knows what they think. . . . They don't say anything. The wolves don't say anything, either, when they gather in packs."

"So there hasn't been any resistance to mobilization?"

"Oh, no—none whatever!"

"Do they realize that the Germans are our enemies?"

"It's not a question of the Germans."

"Of what, then?"

Kii Kievich smiled again.

"It's not a question of the Germans, it's a question of rifles. Getting a rifle in their hands. A man with a rifle in his hand has quite a different psychology. One day we'll see in which direction they mean to turn their rifles . . . that's the thing. . . ."

"But still. . . . Do they talk about the war?"

"Go down to the village, and listen to them."

Antoshka and Elizaveta Kievna went in the dusk to the village. The sky had cooled down and was thickly sprinkled with the stars of August. Below, in Khlibi, it was rather damp, and there was a smell of fresh milk and of the still unlaidd dust raised by the herds. Unharnessed carts stood beside gates. Beneath the limes, where it was quite dark, the well-sweep creaked and a horse snorted and breathed loudly as it drank. Three young girls were seated on logs, in an open space before a thatched wooden barn. Elizaveta Kievna and Antoshka went up to them and sat down too, a little way off.

The girls were singing of the beauty of their native Khlibi: there were flowers in Khlibi, they sang—yes, and fine furniture, and lasses like pictures. Looking towards the newcomers, one of them said softly:

"Well, girls, isn't it time for us to go to bed?"

But they sat on motionless. There was a sound of somebody moving about inside the barn, then the door creaked and a bald peasant in an unbuttoned sheepskin jacket came out. He fumbled long over the padlock, wheezing and coughing, then he went up to the girls, one hand on the small of his back, his straggly beard thrust forward.

"Still singing, my larks!"

"We're singing, but not about you, Gaffer Fyodor."

"I'll get you out of here with a knout in a minute. Singing songs in the night—is that the way to behave?"

"You're jealous!" said a girl, and another added, sighing:

"There's nothing left for us to do, Gaffer Fyodor, but sing about our Khlibi."

"Yes, you're in a bad way. You're all alone now, all the men have gone away."

Fyodor squatted down beside the girls. The one nearest to him said:

"The Kozmodemyan women say they've taken almost all the people in the world to the war."

"It'll be your turn soon, girls."

"To go to the war—us girls?"

They giggled, and then one of them asked:

"Gaffer Fyodor, who is our tsar fighting?"

"Another tsar."

The girls exchanged glances, one sighed, another settled her kerchief, and the third one said:

"That's what the Kozmodemyan women said—he's fighting another tsar."

At this, a shaggy head appeared from behind the logs, the owner of which, pulling his sheepskin jacket round him, said in a hoarse voice:

"You, go on, you—enough of your lies! It isn't another tsar—we're at war with the Germans."

"It may be so," said Gaffer Fyodor.

The head disappeared. Antoshka Arnoldov, taking out his cigarette case, offered a cigarette to Fyodor.

"Tell me, did they go to war willingly from your village?" he asked, picking his words carefully.

"Many went willingly, sir."

"Was there much eagerness?"

"There was. Why not go? They'll have a look and see how things are there. If they're killed—well, people die here, too. Our lands are poor, we live from hand to mouth. And everybody says you're given meat twice a day there, and sugar and tea, and tobacco—you can smoke as much as you like."

"But isn't fighting terrible?"

"Of course it is. There's no denying that."

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\* XV \*

Tarpaulin-covered farm wagons, carts loaded with straw and with hay, ambulances, enormous pontoon troughs moved, swaying and creaking, over the liquid ooze of the highway. A fine slanting rain fell incessantly. The ploughed furrows and the ditches beside the road brimmed with water. Blurred outlines of isolated trees and thickets could be made out in the distance.

Like an avalanche, the Russian army advanced ponderously through rain and mud, to the accompaniment of shouts and oaths, the cracking of whips and the creaking of axles. On either side of the road lay horses dead and dying, and overturned carts, their wheels protruding. Every now and then a military car pushed its way through the stream. This was always the signal for shouts, imprecations, and the rearing of horses, and a loaded cart was sure to begin sliding sideways into the ditch at the side of the road, spilling its human freight.

Every now and then there was a break in the stream of carts, and foot soldiers with sacks and tents on their backs straggled in a long line over the slippery mud. Amidst their disordered ranks moved the baggage carts and other conveyances, with rifles jutting out in all directions and orderlies huddled on top of them. Every now and then someone would run off the road into the field, lay his rifle down in the grass and squat on his heels.

Then came more carts, pontoons, farm wagons, and carriages with drenched figures in military cloaks seated in them. The thunderous procession now fell stumbling and crowding into some narrow defile, men yelling as they fought for places, now slowly dragged its length up a hill and disappeared over the top. Ever more and more carts, laden with grain, hay and shells, came pouring into it on either side. Occasionally small detachments of cavalry, riding across the fields, overtook the procession on the road, and artillery plunged with a metallic thunder in among the carts. Huge, broad-chested horses ridden by Tatars with fierce bearded countenances, lashing out both at horses and human beings, cleared the highway like a plough, dragging in their wake the leaping, flat-nozzled cannon. People kept running up from all directions, others stood up in their carts, waving their arms. And once again the stream would close over the road, and empty itself into some wood, filled with the pungent smell of mushrooms and decaying leaves, and the gentle patter of the rain.

In some places, on either side of the road, stovepipes could be seen protruding forlornly from heaps of rubbish and charred logs; here a broken lantern swayed to and fro, there a cinema poster flapped against the brick wall of a house destroyed by shells. And amidst all this, in a farm cart with no front wheels, lay a wounded Austrian in his blue coat, his shrivelled face sallow, his dull eyes mournful.

About twenty miles ahead, the thunder of cannon resounded hollowly along the smoky horizon. This was the place to which these troops and carts were wending their way day and night, the place to which, all over Russia, trains loaded with grain, human beings and ammunition, were speeding. The country was shaken from its torpor by the thunder of cannon. All the greedy, insatiable, evil instincts which had

been accumulating beneath suppression and tyranny were at last released.

The city populace, sated by their grotesque, corrupt way of living, seemed to have awakened from some oppressive dream. In the thunder of cannon was discerned the rousing challenge of a cosmic tempest. The old way of life had suddenly become intolerable. The population welcomed war with sinister frenzy.

There was little inquiry in the villages as to who the enemy was, or what the war was about. What difference did it make? Eyes had so long been dimmed by a bloody film of rage and hate! The hour for deeds of terror had struck at last. Peasants—boys and men—abandoning their sweet-hearts and wives, crowded, lively and eager, into freight trucks and were borne swiftly past the towns, whistling and singing ribald songs. The old life had come to an end—it seemed as if Russia was being stirred and muddied with a gigantic ladle, and now everything was in motion, pressing onward—all were drunk with the intoxicating fumes of war.

Arriving at the battle zone, the thunder of which could be heard miles away, the carts and troops seemed to be swallowed up. Here all that was living and human came to a standstill. A place in the earth, in a trench, was assigned to each—a place in which to sleep, to eat, to kill lice, a place from which to shoot into the fine mist of rain till the senses reeled.

At night the whole horizon gradually reddened with the high crimson glow of conflagrations; the chains traced across the sky by rockets, and punctuated by fiery sparks, ended in a burst of stars; shells flew up in a crescendo of wails, to explode in columns of fire, smoke, and dust.

Here fear gnawed at the vitals, made the skin creep, the fingers clench and unclench. Towards midnight the signal would be given. Officers would come running up, their faces convulsed, and the soldiers, puffy from sleep and damp, would be aroused with oaths, shouts and blows. And men ran out over the field, stumbling, swearing, and howling like wild beasts, now flinging themselves down, now leaping up, and at last—deafened, maddened, half-stunned by terror and rage—throwing themselves into the enemy's trenches.

Afterwards, nobody could ever remember what had happened in these trenches. When it was desired to boast of

heroic feats—to explain how a bayonet had been thrust, how a head had cracked beneath the butt end of a rifle, there was nothing for it but to lie. The one incontestable result of these attacks was dead bodies.

Another day dawned, and the field kitchens moved up. The soldiers, weary and half-frozen, ate and smoked. After this they talked smut and women, here, too, lying freely. A brief spell in which to hunt for lice, and then sleep. They slept for days on end in that naked spot of thunder and death, befouled by excrements and blood.

Like all the rest, in dirt and in damp, not taking off his clothes or boots for weeks on end, lived Telegin. The regiment of regulars in which he had enrolled as sublieutenant was attacking. More than half of its officers and men had been put out of action, no reinforcements had been sent, and one thought was uppermost in all minds—that of the moment, when, half-dead with fatigue, their clothes in rags, they would be sent to the rear.

But the High Command was desirous at any cost to get across the Carpathian Range before winter came, and press on into Hungary, where the intention was to lay the country waste. Men were not spared—there was no lack of human reserves. It was hoped that the resistance of the Austrian armies, continually retreating in disorder, would be broken by the sustained effort of three months of incessant fighting, that Cracow and Vienna would fall, enabling the Russian left flank to attack Germany's unprotected rear.

In pursuance of this plan the Russian troops marched uninterruptedly west, taking prisoners by the thousand, seizing enormous stores of provisions, ammunition, guns, and clothing. In former wars a mere fraction of such booty, a single one of those endless bloody battles, in which whole battalions fell, would have decided the outcome of a campaign. But now, despite the fact that the regular armies had been destroyed in the very first battles, the struggle only became more acute. Everyone went to the war—the whole nation, from the very young to the very old. There was something beyond human comprehension in this war. The enemy seemed to have been routed, to have shed his last drop of blood—one more effort and victory would be assured. The effort was made, but fresh armies sprang up in the place of the enemy's vanishing forces, marching to death and des-

truction with grim determination. Tatar hordes and Persian cohorts never fought so fiercely or died so readily as these frail and pampered Europeans and shrewd Russian peasants, fully aware that they were mere dumb cattle, meat for the shambles contrived by their masters.

The remnants of Telegin's regiment were entrenched on the bank of a deep, narrow stream. The position was a bad one, thoroughly exposed, and the trenches were shallow. At any moment the regiment expected the order to attack, but in the meantime the opportunity to get a little sleep, to change one's boots, to rest, was welcome, even though sharp firing was kept up from the opposite bank, where an Austrian division was entrenched.

Towards evening when the firing had, as usual, quieted down for a few hours, Ivan Ilyich made his way to regimental headquarters, an abandoned castle a mile or so away.

A fluffy mist lay on the surface of the winding, reed-grown river, and settled in wreaths on some bushes on the bank. It was a still, moist evening with a smell of damp leaves in the air. Every now and then a solitary shot boomed out over the water.

Ivan Ilyich jumped across the ditch at the side of the road, and stopped to light his cigarette. On either side stood huge, leafless trees, looking immensely tall in the mist. The pits and hollows in the swampy ground at their roots seemed to be filled with milk. A bullet whistled plaintively in the stillness. Ivan Ilyich drew a deep sigh and strode over the crunching gravel, looking overhead at the shadowy boughs. The stillness, and the fact that he was walking and thinking quite alone, soothed him; the ear-splitting noises of the day were over, and a subtle, piercing melancholy stole into his heart. Once more he sighed, then, flinging away his cigarette, and interlacing his fingers at the back of his neck, he walked as if in some dream world, inhabited only by the ghosts of trees, by his own pulsating, lovesick heart, and the charm of the absent Dasha.

Dasha was with him in this hour of rest and quiet. Whenever the metallic wail of the shells, the cracking of rifle fire, the cries, the swearing—all these sounds so alien to the divine universe—died down, whenever he was able to huddle into a corner of the dugout, his heart seemed to feel the touch of her charm.

It seemed to Ivan Ilyich that if he were to die this sensation of union would be with him to the very last. He had no fear of death, he did not even think about it. Nothing could take away this wonderful feeling of being alive, not even death.

On his way to Eupatoria that summer, to take, as he had thought, a last look at Dasha, Ivan Ilyich had been low-spirited and nervous, trying to invent all sorts of apologies. But the meeting on the road, Dasha's sudden tears, her fair head pressed against him, her hair, her hands, shoulders, all redolent of the sea, her childish mouth from which, when she lifted her face with the fluttering, wet eyelashes, had come the words: "Ivan Ilyich, dear Ivan Ilyich, I've been longing to see you!"—all these incredible things, falling like a bolt from the blue upon him, there, on the road beside the sea—had turned Ivan Ilyich's whole life upside down in the space of a few minutes. Looking into the beloved face, he had said: "I will love you for ever!"

Afterwards he wondered if he really had uttered those words, or only thought them, and she had understood. Taking her hands off his shoulders, Dasha had said:

"I've got such a lot to tell you. Shall we go on?"

They had gone on till they got to the water's edge, where they sat down. Dasha gathered up a handful of pebbles, and began slowly throwing them into the water.

"The thing is whether you'll still be able to like me when you've heard everything. But it doesn't matter, you must do as you like." She sighed. "I've been behaving very badly all by myself, Ivan Ilyich. You must try and forgive me."

And she began telling him everything, honestly and fully. She told him about Samara, and how she had come to this place, and had met Bessonov, and how she had lost the desire to live, because the Petersburg miasma, which had again come to life, poisoning the blood, arousing curiosity, made everything seem so loathsome.

"How long was one to hold out? I suddenly felt a desire to wallow in the mud—it would serve me right! But at the last moment I took fright. . . . Ivan Ilyich, darling. . . ." Dasha threw out her arms. "Help me! I can't go on loathing myself any more. Surely everything decent in me hasn't perished! I want something quite, quite different!"



After this Dasha had been silent for a long time. Ivan Ilyich had gazed fixedly at the mirrorlike blue water shining in the sun, his heart, despite all, overflowing with joy.

Dasha had only realized a little later, when a wave ruffled by the wind wet her feet, that the war had begun and that Telegin would have to go to join his regiment the next day.

"Ivan Ilyich?"

"Yes?"

"Do you like me?"

"Yes."

"Very much?"

"Yes."

Then she had crept closer to him, moving over the sand on her knees, and put her hand into his, as she had done that day on the steamer.

"Ivan Ilyich—I like you, too."

Squeezing his trembling fingers hard, she asked, after a silence:

"What was that you said to me just now, in the road?" She wrinkled up her forehead. "War? Who with?"

"The Germans."

"Oh, yes—and you?"

"I have to go tomorrow."

Dasha gasped, and again fell silent. Nikolai Ivanovich, evidently just out of bed, was running towards them from some way off in his striped pyjamas, waving a page from the newspaper in his hand, and shouting to them.

At first he did not seem to have noticed Ivan Ilyich, but when Dasha said: "Nikolai, this is my greatest friend," Nikolai Ivanovich seized Telegin by the lapels of his coat, and roared into his face:

"So this is what we've come to, young man—eh! There's your civilization! It's monstrous! Can you take it in? It's sheer delirium!"

All that day Dasha, docile and meditative, had never left Ivan Ilyich's side. This day, filled with the light of the sun and the noise of the sea, had seemed like an eternity to him. Each minute of it seemed to expand into a lifetime.

Telegin and Dasha had wandered along the beach, lain down on the sand, sat on the balcony, all in a sort of daze. And it had been impossible to get rid of Nikolai Ivanovich,

who had followed them about everywhere, holding forth endlessly on the war and the barbarity of the Germans.

Towards evening, at last shaking him off, Dasha and Telegin went for a long walk over the curving sands. They walked in silence, keeping step. And here Ivan Ilyich began to think he ought, after all, to say something to Dasha. She must be expecting a passionate, above all, a clear, declaration. And what could he say? Could any words express the feelings which filled him? No, they could not be expressed.

"No, no," he said to himself, looking down at the ground, "it would be unscrupulous to say things like that to her. It can't be that she loves me, but, like the good, honest girl she is, she might think she was bound to accept me if I proposed. But that would be bringing pressure to bear on her. And the fact that we must part for an indefinite period, and that I shall probably not return from the war, gives me still less right to speak. . . ."

This was one of his attacks of self-torture. Dasha suddenly stopped short, and leaned against his shoulder to take off one of her slippers.

"Oh, my goodness!" she said, and began to shake the sand out of it; when she had put it on again, she straightened herself and heaved a profound sigh.

"I'll love you ever so much, after you've gone, Ivan Ilyich."

She placed her hand against his neck and, gazing into his face from her clear grey eyes—eyes almost severe, with no hint of a smile in them—she sighed again, lightly this time.

"We'll be together there, too, won't we?"

Ivan Ilyich had drawn her gently towards him and kissed her on her delicate, trembling lips. Dasha closed her eyes. Then, when they were both quite breathless, Dasha extricated herself, and took Ivan Ilyich's arm, and they walked on together beside the dark, heavy water, lapping the sand at their feet with crimson tongues.

Ivan Ilyich called all this to mind with fresh emotion whenever there was a moment's quiet. And now, strolling between the trees along the misty highway, his hands clasped at the back of his neck, he saw once more Dasha's serious gaze, felt again her long kiss.

"Halt, who goes there?" cried a rough voice from the mist.

"A friend! A friend!" replied Ivan Ilyich, letting his hands drop into the pockets of his overcoat, and turning

under some oak trees towards the vague bulk of the castle, some of the windows of which showed a yellow light. A man standing in the entrance, on catching sight of Telegin, cast away a cigarette and stood at attention.

"Mail not in yet?"

"No, Sir, we're expecting it."

Ivan Ilyich went into the hall. At the very end, over a broad oak staircase, hung an antique tapestry depicting Adam and Eve standing amidst some very thin trees, she holding an apple, he, a flowering branch. Their faded countenances and bluish forms were faintly illuminated by a candle stuck in a bottle, which stood on the pillar at the foot of the staircase.

Ivan Ilyich opened a door to the right and went into an empty room with a sculptured ceiling, which had collapsed where a shell had struck the corner of the wall the day before. Lieutenant Prince Belski and Second Lieutenant Martinov were seated on a cot in front of a blazing fire. Ivan Ilyich greeted them, asked when a car was expected from headquarters, and sat down at a little distance, on a pile of cartridge containers. The light made him blink.

"Well, is the firing still going on over there?" asked Martinov.

Ivan Ilyich merely shrugged his shoulders. Prince Belski went on speaking in lowered tones.

"It's the stink that's worst of all. I wrote home and told them I'm not afraid of death. I'm ready to sacrifice my life for my country—strictly speaking that's why I transferred to the infantry, and am now stuck in the trenches. But the stink is killing me."

"The stink's nothing. If you don't like it, don't smell it," said Martinov, straightening one of his shoulder straps. "The worst thing is that there are no women here. That won't lead to any good. Just think of it—the Army Commander is an old dotard, so we all have to live like monks, without women or wine. Is that what you call looking after the army, is that what you call war?"

Martinov rose from the cot and began kicking at a flaming log with the toe of his boot. Prince Belski went on smoking pensively, gazing into the flame.

"Five million soldiers mucking up the place," he said, "and in addition, dead bodies and dead horses rotting. I shall remember this war all my life as a bad smell. Ugh!"

The throbbing of an automobile engine was heard in the yard.

"Gentlemen—the mail has come!" exclaimed an excited voice in the doorway.

The officers rushed out to the porch. Dark figures were moving round the car, others were running about the yard. And a hoarse voice kept repeating:

"Don't snatch, please, gentlemen!"

The sacks of letters and parcels were carried into the hall, and unpacked, on the staircase, beneath the tapestry of Adam and Eve. It was a month's mail. A veritable ocean of love and grief seemed to be contained in the soiled canvas bags, a life that was sweet, and gone beyond recall.

"Don't snatch, gentlemen!"

Burly, crimson-faced captain Babkin growled: "Sublieutenant Telegin, six letters and a parcel. Ensign Nezhni, two letters...."

"Nezhni's been killed, gentlemen."

"When?"

"This morning."

Ivan Ilyich went over to the fireplace. All six letters were from Dasha. The address on the envelopes was written in a bold hand. Ivan Ilyich felt a rush of tenderness for the dear hand which had formed such big letters. Bending over the fire, he carefully tore open the first envelope. It emanated such recollections that he was forced to close his eyes for a moment. Then he began to read it.

"Nikolai Ivanovich and I went to Simferopol directly after seeing you off, and got into the Petersburg train. We're in our old apartment now. Nikolai Ivanovich is frightfully upset; not a word from Katyusha and we don't even know where she is. The thing that has happened to you and me is so great and so sudden, that I haven't got back my senses yet. Don't be cross with me for writing 'you' instead of 'thou'! I love you. I will be true to you, and love you ever so much. But just now everything's so confusing. Troops are passing up and down with bands playing, and it's all so sad, as if happiness were going away with the bugles and the soldiers. I know I shouldn't say so—but do be careful there, at the war...."

"Your Honour, Your Honour!"

Telegin turned with difficulty--there was an orderly standing in the doorway.

"A telephonogram, Your Honour. You are wanted in the company."

"Who wants me?"

"Lieutenant Colonel Rozanov. He asks you to be there as quickly as possible."

Telegin refolded the letter, which he had not finished reading, thrust it with the others beneath his shirt, tilted his cap over his eyes, and went out.

The fog was now still thicker and the trees had become invisible, it was like wading through milk, and the road could only be made out by the crunching of the gravel underfoot. Ivan Ilyich repeated to himself: "I will be true to you and love you ever so much." Suddenly he stopped, and stood there listening. Not a sound came from the fog, excepting when a heavy drop fell from a tree. And then, quite near, he began to distinguish a sort of gurgling, and a soft rustle. He went on again, and the gurgling became still more distinct. He stepped back hastily, and a clod of earth, breaking off from under his foot, fell with a heavy splash into water.

Apparently this was the place where the highroad came to an end at a bridge which had been burned. On the other side, a hundred paces away, he knew the Austrian trenches extended almost to the bank. And sure enough, immediately after the splash made by the falling clod, a shot rang out from the other side, like the crack of a whip, its sound reverberating on the surface of the water; it was followed by another and yet another, and at last by a prolonged volley, like the clattering of metal, answered by rapid reports coming through the fog from all directions. The roaring and thunder over the river grew louder and louder, and in the midst of this infernal din the busy rap-rap of a machine gun could be heard. "Boom!" went something in the wood. The ragged, echoing fog hugged the ground, concealing this loathsome, but already commonplace business.

Several times a bullet hit a tree close by Ivan Ilyich with a champing sound, and a branch would be snapped off. He turned from the road into the field, groping his way blindly among the bushes. The firing began to abate as suddenly as it had started and soon died down altogether. Ivan Ilyich

took off his cap and mopped his forehead. Once again all was as still as death, and nothing was heard but the dripping of raindrops from bushes. Thank God, he would be able to read Dasha's letters today! Ivan Ilyich laughed, and jumped across a ditch. Suddenly he heard, quite near, a yawn, and the words:

"A fine sleep we got, Vasili—a fine sleep!"

"Hold on!" said another voice hastily. "There's someone coming."

"Who goes there?"

"A friend! A friend!" said Telegin hastily, and at that moment caught sight of the earthen breastwork of a trench, from behind which two bearded countenances were gazing upwards.

"What company?" he asked.

"Company Three, Sir, your own company. Why do you walk on the top, Sir? You might be hit."

Jumping into the trench, Telegin walked along it to the communication trench leading to the officers' dugout. The soldiers, awakened by the firing, were saying:

"In a fog like this 'he' could easily cross the river somewhere."

"Easy as easy."

"Firing all of a sudden, booming away like that.... Does 'he' want to frighten us, or did 'he' get a fright 'himself'?"

"Aren't you afraid?"

"Me? I'm a nervous chap, you know."

"Gavril's had his finger chopped off, lads!"

"You should have heard him yell!"

"Some people have all the luck. He'll be sent home."

"Not he! If it had been his whole hand, now! But just a finger—he'll be kept rotting somewhere near for a while—and back with him to the company!"

"When is this war going to come to an end?"

"Oh, chuck it!"

"It'll come to an end, but we shan't be there to see it."

"If we could only take Vienna!"

"What's Vienna to you?"

"Oh, nothing, but still...."

"Even if the war isn't over by spring, everyone will be running home. Who's to plough the land? The women? Men

have been butchered by the bushel. We've had enough of it. We're gorged with blood, we've had our share."

"The generals will be in no hurry to stop fighting, you know."

"What's all this talk? Who said that?"

"Aw, drop it, sergeant . . . you go on. . . ."

"The generals won't stop fighting. . . ."

"He's right, lads! In the first place, they draw double pay, and get crosses and medals. A man told me the English give our generals thirty-eight and a half rubles for every recruit."

"The swine! Selling us like cattle."

"All right! Hold out a little longer, and we'll show them!"

When Telegin went into the dugout, Lieutenant Colonel Rozanov, the battalion commander, fat, bespectacled, with tufts of sparse hair, called out from where he sat on a pile of horse cloths, in a corner sheltered by branches of fir:

"So you've come at last, old man!"

"Sorry, Fyodor Kuzmich, I lost my way in the fog."

"There's work to do tonight, old man."

He put into his mouth the crust of bread which he had all the time been holding in his grimy fist. Telegin's jaw set gradually.

"You see, Ivan Ilyich, old man, we've been given the order to cross to the other side. It would be nice if we could manage this business smoothly. Sit down here next to me. Have some brandy? Look, this is what I thought of doing. . . . Throw a bridge across, exactly opposite the big gorse-bush. Send over two sections."

\* XVI \*

"Susov?"

"Here, Your Honour!"

"Dig here! Gently—don't throw the earth into the water! Forward, boys, forward! Zubtsov!"

"Here, Your Honour!"

"Wait a minute! Put it there. Dig a little more. . . . Lower it. . . . Easy now!"

"Easy there, boys! You'll tear my arm off! Push away!"

"Come on, now—push!"

"Don't shout—quiet, you swine!"

"Bear down on the other end.... Shall we lift, Your Honour?"

"Have you fixed the ends?"

"Everything's fixed."

"Heave!"

In the clouds of moonlight-flushed mist two tall stakes, joined by crossbeams, reared their height into the air with a groaning sound. This was the suspension bridge. The dim figures of the volunteer group were scarcely visible as they moved about the bank. They were talking and swearing in hurried whispers.

"Has it settled?"

"Yes, it's gone in nicely."

"Lower away! Careful, there!"

"Gently, gently, lads!"

The stakes, their ends sunk in the bank of the river, at its narrowest place, leaned slowly forward, and hung in the mist over the water.

"Will it reach to the other bank?"

"Mind how you lower it!"

"It's heavy!"

"Stop.... Stop! Gently!"

But the far end of the bridge dropped into the water with a loud splash. Telegin waved his hand.

"Down!"

The volunteers lay down, sank noiselessly to the ground crouching in the grass of the bank. The mist was getting thinner, but at the same time it grew darker, and the air was becoming sharper with the onset of day. All was quiet on the other side. Telegin called out:

"Zubtsov!"

"Here!"

"Get in, and start laying."

Exuding a pungent whiff of sweat, the tall figure of Vasili Zubtsov passed Telegin and slipped down the bank into the water. Ivan Ilyich could see the great hand, trembling, clutch at the grass, let go of it, and disappear.

"It's deep," came Zubtsov's voice from somewhere below, in a frozen whisper. "Give the planks here, boys...."

"The planks—hand up the planks!"



The planks were passed from hand to hand, with soundless rapidity. They could not be nailed in place, for fear of the noise. After laying the first rows, Zubtsov clambered out of the water to the bridge, muttering under his breath, his teeth chattering:

"Pass up the planks. . . . Hurry up! Don't go to sleep!"

The icy water gurgled beneath the bridge, the stakes swayed. Telegin could make out the dark outlines of the bushes on the other side, and though they differed in no way from the bushes on the Russian side, they had a sinister look. Ivan Ilyich returned to the bank where the rest of his group were lying, and cried sharply:

"Up!"

Immediately blurred figures, looking fantastically tall, thrust upwards into the white clouds of the mist.

"Single file—run!"

Telegin turned towards the bridge. Just then the yellowish planks and Zubtsov's black-bearded visage, jerked backward in alarm, were lit up as by a ray of sunshine falling on a cloud. The beam of a searchlight swept sideways towards the bushes, picked out a single, rugged branch with bare twigs, and again rested on the planks. Telegin, his teeth clenched, ran over the bridge. This seemed to be the signal for all that black stillness to break inside his brain with a deafening roar. Rifle and machine-gun fire began pouring down on the bridge from the Austrian side. Telegin sprang on shore, dropped to his heels, and looked back. A tall soldier—who it was he could not make out—was running over the bridge, his rifle held tightly to his chest. Suddenly he dropped the rifle, threw up his arms and fell sideways into the water. A machine gun was raking the bridge, the water, the bank. . . . Another man ran across—it was Susov—and threw himself down beside Telegin. . . .

"Tear their guts—the bloody swine!"

Another ran across, and another, till there were four of them. The next one was swept off the bridge and fell struggling and shrieking into the water.

All had now crossed, and were prone on the ground, having managed to pile up a little earth in front of them with their spades. Terrific firing was now raging up and down the river. They dared not raise their heads—a machine gun rained incessantly down upon the spot where Telegin and his

volunteers lay. Suddenly something whizzed not far overhead—once, twice, and again, up to six times—and six deafening explosions followed. It was the Russians firing at the machine-gun emplacement.

Telegin and Zubtsov (who was lying in front of him) jumped up, ran forty paces, and again dropped to the ground. The machine gun opened fire again from the darkness on the left. But it was obvious that the firing from the Russian side was stronger and the Austrians were being driven underground. Under cover of a lull in the firing the volunteers ran up to the place at which, the day before, the Russian artillery had cut the barbed-wire entanglements in front of the Austrian trenches.

Attempts had been made to repair it during the night, and a dead body was stuck on the wires. Zubtsov cut the wires and the body fell like a sack at Telegin's feet. Volunteer Laptev went ahead of the rest on all fours, without a rifle, and dropped down in front of the breastwork. Zubtsov shouted to him:

"Get up and throw a bomb!"

But Laptev neither spoke, moved, nor turned—he seemed to be paralyzed with fear. The firing grew more intense, and the volunteers could not move—they could only flatten themselves against the ground, and attempt to dig themselves in.

"Get up! Throw your bomb, son-of-a-bitch!" yelled Zubtsov. "Throw your bomb!"

Stretching out as far as he could, and holding his rifle by the butt end, he jabbed at Laptev's stiff greatcoat with the bayonet. Laptev turned a terrified face, took the hand grenade from his belt, and, flinging himself against the breastwork, threw the missile, jumping into the trench as it exploded.

"On! On!" yelled Zubtsov in an unnatural voice.

Nine or ten of the volunteers got to their feet, ran forward, and disappeared underground. Nothing was heard but the sharp, rending sounds of explosions.

Telegin rushed blindly to and fro along the breastwork, trying in vain to detach his hand grenade; at last he leaped into the trench and ran, stumbling, and yelling at the top of his voice, his shoulders rubbing against the sticky clay.... He saw the face, white as a mask, of a man squeezed against the bottom of the trench, and seized him by the shoulder.

But the man only muttered continually, as if talking in his sleep. . . .

"Shut up, you fool, I'm not going to hurt you," Telegin shouted, almost in tears, at the white mask, as he ran ahead, jumping over dead bodies. But the fight was over now. Grey figures, flinging down their rifles, were clambering out of the trenches into the field. They were thrust back by the butt ends of Russian rifles. And all the while, forty paces away in a hidden emplacement, a machine gun was still keeping up its roar as it fired at the river crossing. Ivan Ilyich, shouldering his way through the crowd of volunteers and prisoners, shouted:

"Can't somebody stop that? Zubtsov! Where's Zubtsov?"

"Here I am!"

"Can't you stop that, you damned fool?"

"If I knew how to get to it. . . ."

They ran forward.

"Stop—here it is!"

A narrow passage led from the trench to the machine-gun emplacement. Bending down, Telegin rushed into the shelter, where everything was shaking in the darkness from the intolerable thunder, seized somebody by the elbow, and dragged him out. There was instant quiet, only broken by the struggles and heavy breathing of the man he was trying to drag away from the machine gun.

"Swine! You won't leave go, won't you? Here, let me. . . ." muttered Zubtsov from behind, and struck the man three times on the head with the butt end of his rifle. The Austrian shuddered, groaned, and was still. Telegin let go of him and went out of the dugout. Zubtsov called after him: "He's chained, Your Honour!"

Soon it grew quite light. Stains and streams of blood could be made out on the yellow clay. A few tattered calfskins, tin cans and frying pans were strewn about in wild confusion, and everywhere were dead bodies huddled like sacks. The volunteers, utterly worn out, rested, ate food from tins, and rummaged in the scattered kitbags of the Austrians.

The prisoners had been sent back across the river long ago. The regiment crossed to the other bank, and took up its position, from which the artillery fired on the Austrians' second line, evoking but a languid response. It began to

drizzle, and the fog dispersed. Ivan Ilyich, his elbow on the edge of the trench, gazed at the field over which they had run in the night. It was just an ordinary field, brown and wet, with here and there a tangle of barbed wire, some dark patches where the earth had been dug, and a few bodies of his own men. The river was quite close. The towering trees and the sinister bushes of yesterday were nowhere to be seen. But what an expenditure of men and material the crossing of these few yards had entailed!

The Austrians continued to retreat, and the Russian troops, never letting up for a moment, pursued them till nightfall. Telegin and his volunteers had been ordered to occupy a wood crowning a distant ridge, and after a brisk exchange of firing they occupied it by the evening. Hastily entrenching themselves, they posted sentries, established telephonic communication with the division, and ate what was in their kitbags. Many slept under the fine rain, in the darkness, amidst decaying leaves, although the order had been given to keep up the firing all night.

Telegin was seated on a stump, leaning against the soft, moss-covered trunk of a tree. Every now and then a drop fell down his collar, inside, which was a good thing, for it kept him awake. The excitement of the morning had long passed, as had even the terrible fatigue brought on by marching over acres of sodden crops, climbing fences, and jumping ditches, stepping out at random on stiffened feet, with a head throbbing with pain.

Somebody approached him, walking over fallen leaves, and Zubtsov's voice said softly:

"Want a crust?"

"Thanks."

Ivan Ilyich took the crust from his hand and began munching it—it was so sweet, it fairly melted in the mouth. Zubtsov squatted down beside him.

"May I smoke, Sir?"

"All right—but be careful!"

"I have a pipe!"

"Zubtsov, you shouldn't have killed him, you know."

"The machine gunner?"

"Yes."

"Of course I shouldn't have."

"Want to have a sleep?"

"Oh—I can do without sleep!"

"Give me a push if I go off, then."

The drops fell slowly, gently, on the rotting leaves, on Telegin's hand, on the peak of his cap. They fell like glass beads, after the noise, the shouts, the loathsome turmoil, the murder of the machine gunner. They fell into the sombre depths filled with the smell of decaying leaves. Their rustle made sleep impossible. Mustn't sleep, mustn't. . . . Ivan Ilyich forced his lids apart, and his glance fell upon the vague outlines of branches, which looked as if they had been traced in charcoal. But there was no sense in firing all night, either . . . let the men rest. . . . Eight killed, eleven wounded. Yes, yes, one must be careful at the war. Oh, Dasha, Dasha! The crystal drops were so consoling, so soothing. . . .

"Ivan Ilyich!"

"Yes, yes! I'm not asleep, Zubtsov!"

"It is wrong to kill a man, isn't it? No doubt he has a home, a family of some sort, and you stick your bayonet into him as if he were just a dummy—and it's all over. The first time I finished off a man I couldn't eat, I was sick. And now I've polished off my ninth or tenth. . . . It's horrible, isn't it? Has anyone taken that sin upon himself?"

"What sin?"

"Well—my sin! I ask you, has anyone taken my sin upon himself—some general, or somebody over in Petersburg, who sees to all that sort of thing?"

"What sin have you committed, if you're defending your native land?"

"That's so . . . but . . . listen, Ivan Ilyich, it must be somebody's fault—and we'll find him. Let the ones who got up this war answer for it. Let them answer for it with their blood. . . ."

A shot rang out in the wood with a hollow sound. Telegin started. The shot was answered by several more from the opposite direction.

The surprise was the greater, since there had been no contacts with the enemy since the evening. Telegin rushed to the telephone. The operator thrust his head out of a hole in the ground.

"Not working, Your Honour."

Frequent shots now began to be heard from all round the wood, and bullets burst with a cracking noise against twigs. The advance posts spread out and opened fire. A volunteer named Klimov turned up at Telegin's side, and exclaimed in a strange, uncanny voice:

"We're surrounded, Your Honour!" Then, clutching at his face, he dropped to the ground and lay prone. In the darkness another voice cried out:

"I'm dying, brothers!"

Between the boles of the trees Telegin could discern the tall, motionless figures of his volunteers. He was conscious that they were all looking towards him. He gave the order for all to make their way, one at a time, to the north side of the wood, which was probably not yet surrounded. He himself would hold the position with anyone who cared to stay with him, here, in the trenches.

"Five men are required. Who wants to stay?"

Zubtsov, Susov, and a lad called Kolov, stepped out from behind the trees and came up to him.

"Two more wanted! You come, Ryabkin!" cried Zubtsov, turning his head.

"All right—I will."

"One more to make five!"

A short man in a sheepskin jacket and shaggy cap rose from the ground.

"I may as well stay."

The six men lay down about twenty paces apart, and opened fire. The figures behind the trees disappeared. Ivan Ilyich fired a few rounds and suddenly saw, with merciless clarity, men in blue coats turning his grinning corpse on to its back the next morning, the better to rummage in his clothes, saw a grimy hand feeling inside his shirt.

He laid down his rifle, scraped a hollow in the soft damp soil, and, taking out Dasha's letters, kissed them, placed them in the hollow, and spread dead leaves over the top.

"Brothers! Brothers!" came Susov's voice from the left. There were only two rounds of cartridges left. Ducking, Ivan Ilyich crawled over to Susov, sank down beside him, and took a round out of his case. Now there was only himself, and one other, on the right, still shooting. At last there were no more cartridges left. Ivan Ilyich waited a moment, got up, glancing from side to side, and began to call the volun-

teers by name. A voice answered "Here!", and Kolov came up, leaning on his rifle.

"Any cartridges?" asked Ivan Ilyich.

"No."

"Don't any of the others answer?"

"No! Not one!"

"All right. Let's go. Run!"

Kolov flung his rifle across his shoulder, and ran, dodging behind the tree trunks. But before Telegin had time to take a dozen steps, a blunt iron finger seemed to give him a poke in the shoulder.

## \* XVII \*

The conception of war as a series of dashing cavalry assaults, spectacular marches, and heroic feats by men and officers, turned out to be quite out-of-date.

The sole outcome of the famous assault of Horse Guards, when Regimental Commander Prince Dolgorukov, striding ahead under machine-gun fire with a cigar in his mouth, and swearing, as always, in French, led three squadrons in infantry formation past barbed-wire defences without a shot fired, had been that the Guards, losing half their strength, captured a couple of heavy guns, which turned out to have been purposely put out of order, and to have been covered by a single machine gun.

A Cossack officer commenting on this incident, said:

"I could have taken that rubbish with a dozen Cossacks."

From the very first months it was abundantly evident that the heroism of the old-time soldier—a huge, bewhiskered, heroic-looking individual, who could gallop, lay about him with a sword, and pay no heed to bullets—was useless. A mastery of technique and the ability to organize the rear had become the first requirements in warfare. Soldiers were only called upon to die with resolute obedience in places indicated on a map. Soldiers who could hide, burrow into the ground, fade into the dusty background, were what was wanted. The sentimental regulations laid down at the Hague Conference as to moral and immoral ways of killing, were calmly ignored. And together with this scrap of paper there disappeared the last remnants of moral laws now become utterly unnecessary.

Thus, in a few months of war, the work of a century was accomplished. Hitherto there had still been many to believe that human life was ruled by higher moral laws, that good was ultimately destined to conquer evil, and humanity to become perfect. Alas, these ideas turned out to be mere survivals from medieval times, only capable of weakening the will, and retarding the march of civilization. It had now become plain even to the most inveterate idealists that the terms good and evil were purely philosophic conceptions, and that the genius of humanity had entered the service of a bad master.

It was a time when the very children were taught that murder, destruction, the wiping out of whole nations, were heroic and sacred achievements. Millions of newspaper columns daily asserted this, wailing and appealing to their readers. There were experts who foretold, each morning, the outcome of battles. The papers printed the predictions of that famous visionary, Madam Tab. Innumerable fortunetellers, astrologists, and soothsayers sprang up. Goods were scarce. Prices rose. The export of raw material from Russia was stopped. To the three ports in the North and in the East—the only remaining outlets for the closed and isolated country—came nothing but shells and the implements of warfare. The land was neglected. Paper money was sent to the countryside by the billion, and the peasants were already displaying signs of reluctance to sell their grain.

At the secret congress of the Occult Lodge of Anthroposophists in Stockholm, the founder of the Order declared that the terrible struggle being waged in higher spheres had now been transferred to the earth, that a world catastrophe was impending, and Russia would be offered up as a sacrifice to redeem humanity from sin. All rational arguments were drowned in the oceans of blood in which the two-thousand-mile girdle round Europe was submerged. Reason was powerless to explain why humanity was stubbornly destroying itself with steel, dynamite and starvation. Certain age-old ulcers had burst. The heritage of the past had fallen due. But this was no explanation either.

Famine began in several countries. Everywhere life was at a standstill. It began to look as if the war were merely the first act of a tragedy.

Confronted by this spectacle, the individual, "the microcosm," the swollen ego, shrank timidly into a mere speck



of dust. His place behind the footlights in this tragedy was taken by the primeval masses.

It came hardest of all on the women. Each, according to her beauty, charm, and ability, had spun her web from fine threads which had been sufficiently strong for everyday life. At any rate those whose fate it was, had fallen into them, buzzing amorously. But these webs too were broken by war. And there could be no question, in such terrible times, of spinning them afresh. There was nothing for it but to wait for better days. And the women waited patiently, though time passed, and the most precious years of a woman's life slipped by in barren melancholy.

Husbands, lovers, brothers and sons—now mere ciphers, abstract units—lay beneath mounds of earth in fields, on the outskirts of woods, at the roadside. And no efforts could expunge the wrinkles continually appearing on ageing feminine countenances.

## \* XVIII \*

"I said to my brother: 'You're a dogmatist, I hate the Social-Democrats. You're ready to subject people to torture for a single verbal slip. You're an astral being,' I told him. He couldn't stand that, so he turned me out of his house. So here I am in Moscow, without a penny. Isn't it a scream? Do speak to Nikolai Ivanovich about me, Darya Dmitrevna! I'd take anything, but of course I'd prefer work in a hospital train."

"All right, I'll speak to him."

"I have no friends here. Do you remember our 'Centre'? They say Vasili Veniaminovich Valet has gone to China... Sapozhkov's somewhere at the front. Zhiron's in the Caucasus, giving lectures on futurism. And where Ivan Ilyich Telegin is, I don't know. You used to know him quite well, I believe."

Elizaveta Kievna and Dasha walked slowly along the side street, between towering heaps of snow. A fine snow was falling, and crunching beneath their feet. A low sleigh jogged by, and its driver, his felt boot protruding stiffly over its edge, shouted at them:

"Look out, young ladies, or I'll run over you!"

There was a great deal of snow that winter. The branches of lime trees, heavy with snow, hung low over the street. Birds were flying backwards and forwards against the white, snowy sky. The crows which lived on the church roofs flew cawing in ragged flocks over the town, perching on towers and cupolas, and soaring to chilly heights.

Dasha stopped at the corner of the street, and settled the white shawl over her head. Her sealskin coat and muff were covered with snowflakes. Her face had become thinner, and her eyes seemed still larger and graver.

"Ivan Ilyich is missing," she said. "I know nothing about him."

Dasha raised her eyes and looked at the birds. The crows must be hungry in the snow-covered town. Elizaveta Kievna stood there, the smile stiffening on her heavily rouged lips, her head bent. She had on a cap with earflaps and a man's coat; the coat was tight across the chest, its fur collar was too large, and the short sleeves did not reach to her reddened hands. Snowflakes were melting on her sallow neck.

"I'll speak to Nikolai Ivanovich today," said Dasha.

"I'd take anything," said Elizaveta Kievna, looking at the ground and shaking her head. "I worshipped Ivan Ilyich, I simply worshipped him." She laughed, and her shortsighted eyes filled with tears. "I'll come to you tomorrow, then. Goodbye."

She turned and strode away in her felt boots, her chilly hands thrust in her pockets, man-fashion.

Dasha looked after her, knitted her brows, and turned the corner, walking up to the entrance of the large private house now being used as a hospital. Here, in the lofty panelled rooms, smelling of iodoform, cropheaded wounded men in dressing gowns lay or sat on beds. Two were playing draughts near a window. One was pacing softly up and down the room in his slippers. When Dasha appeared he cast a rapid glance at her, wrinkled up his low forehead, and lay down on a bed, clasping his hands behind his head.

"Nurse!" called a weak voice.

Dasha went up to a burly, puffy fellow with thick lips.

"Turn me on my left side for the love of Christ," he said, moaning after each word. Dasha took hold of him, exerted all her strength to lift him, and turned him over like a sack.

"It's time to take my temperature, Nurse!"

Dasha shook the thermometer, and put it under his armpit.

"I keep vomiting, Nurse. If I eat so much as a crumb, it all comes up. I can't stand it any more!"

Dasha covered him with the blanket, and left him. Smiles came from neighbouring beds. Somebody said:

"He's putting it on for you, Nurse. He's as strong as an ox."

"Let him have his fun!" came in another voice. "It's work for the nurse, and it makes him happy."

"Semyon wants to ask you something, Nurse, but he's shy."

Dasha went up to a peasant with merry eyes, as round as a daw's, and an absurdly small mouth, like a bear's. His vast, fan-shaped beard was nicely combed. As Dasha approached he thrust it out, protruding his lips.

"They're only joking, Nurse. I'm perfectly satisfied, I humbly thank you."

Dasha smiled. The load that she had felt on her heart lightened. She sat down on the side of the bed next to Semyon, and turning back his sleeve examined his dressings. He began to give her a detailed account of all his aches and pains.

Dasha had come to Moscow in October, when Nikolai Ivanovich, moved by patriotic enthusiasm, had taken a post in the Moscow section of the Municipal Union for Defence. He handed over his Petersburg flat to an Englishman from the Military Mission, and lived with Dasha in Moscow with the utmost simplicity, going about in a suède jacket, abusing the pampered intellectuals, and working, as he said, like a horse.

Dasha studied criminal law, looked after the tiny household, and wrote daily to Ivan Ilyich. Within her, all was calm and stillness. The past seemed as remote as if it had belonged to another existence. And now she seemed to be living with half her being, always filled with anxiety, hoping for news, and concerned to preserve herself for Ivan Ilyich in purity and strictness.

Early in November, while sipping her morning coffee, Dasha was turning the pages of *The Russian Word*, when her eyes fell upon the name "Telegin" in the lists of the missing. The list occupied two columns in small type. So many wounded, so many killed, so many missing, and at the very end—"Telegin, I. I., Sublieutenant."

Thus was the event which darkened her whole life marked by half a line of small type.

Dasha felt as if those tiny letters, arid lines, columns and headings, had all turned to blood. It was a moment of indescribable horror—the printed sheet seemed to have become that which was written on it—a foul-smelling, bloodstained mess, from which there seemed to arise a stifling stench, and a confused roar of voices.

Dasha was seized by a fit of shivering. Even her despair was dissolved in this animal horror and loathing. She lay down on the sofa and covered herself with her coat.

Nikolai Ivanovich came home to dinner, sat down at Dasha's feet and stroked them in silence.

"Just wait, Dasha," said Nikolai Ivanovich. "Just wait. He's missing—he's probably been taken prisoner. I know hundreds of such cases."

In the night she had a dream: in a narrow, empty room, its windows covered with dust and cobwebs, a man in a soldier's tunic was sitting on the side of an iron cot. His haggard face was distorted with pain. He was picking at his bald head with both hands, shelling it as if it were an egg, and putting what was under the skin into his mouth.

Dasha screamed so violently in the night that Nikolai Ivanovich appeared at her bedside, a blanket thrown round his shoulders, and for a long time could not get her to tell him what the matter was. Then he measured out a few drops of valerian into a wineglass, gave some to Dasha, and took some himself.

Dasha, sitting up in bed, was beating her breast with bunched-up fingertips, and repeating softly and desperately:

"I can't go on living—d'you understand? Do you understand, Nikolai, I can't, and I don't want to!"

It was very hard to go on living after what had happened, and to go on living as Dasha had lived up till now, was impossible.

The war had only had to touch Dasha with its iron finger, for all tears and all deaths to become her affair. And when the first days of acute despair had passed, she began to do the only thing she was capable of doing—she took a short course in hospital nursing, and went to work in a hospital.

At first it was very hard. The wounded arrived from the front with dressings which had not been changed for days.

Such an intolerable stench arose from the bandages that the nurses turned faint. During operations Dasha had to hold blackened legs and arms, from which fell clots of dried blood and pus, and she grew to know how strong men clench their teeth, and how their limbs tremble helplessly with pain.

There was so much of this suffering that sufficient pity for it could not have been found in the world's whole store of mercy. Dasha began to feel that she was now eternally bound up with this mutilated, blood-soaked life, and that there was no other. The green lamp shade shone in the staff room, while on the other side of the wall someone muttered in delirium; bottles rattled on a shelf when a car clattered by in the street. The dreary routine had become an integral part of real life.

Seated during the night watch at the table in the staff room, Dasha would go over the past in her mind, and ever more clearly she saw it as a dream. She had lived on heights from which the earth was not visible. She had lived as all around her had lived, self-centred and supercilious. And she had had to fall from these clouds into the blood, and the dirt, into this hospital, with its smell of diseased bodies where people groaned heavily, raved and muttered in their sleep. There was this Tatar soldier dying, and in ten minutes she would have to go and give him a morphia injection.

Today's meeting with Elizaveta Kievna had upset Dasha. It had been a hard day, the wounded had been brought from Galicia in the most appalling state—here a hand had had to be amputated, there an arm, and two men were raving in their last delirium.

Dasha was tired after the day's work, but she could not get Elizaveta Kievna, with her red hands, man's coat, piteous smile and gentle eyes, out of her head.

In the evening, as she was sitting and resting, Dasha looked at the great lamp shade and thought how she wished she were capable of weeping at a street corner, and saying to a stranger: "I simply worshipped Ivan Ilyich."

Dasha seated herself in a big armchair, fidgeted a little, tucked her feet beneath her, and opened a book—a report on the three months' activities of the Municipal Union. Here were columns of figures and all sorts of utterly meaningless words, but no consolation. She glanced at her watch, sighed, and went to the ward.

In the stuffy room, the wounded were sleeping. High up, just beneath the oak-beamed ceiling, a dim lamp burned in the circular iron chandelier. The young Tatar soldier whose arm had been amputated was delirious, his shaven head tossing on the pillow. Dasha picked up an ice bag from the floor, laid it on his burning forehead, and tucked up his blanket. After making the rounds of the beds, she seated herself on a stool, her hands folded in her lap.

"My heart is untrained, that's what it is," she told herself. "It only knew how to love what was exquisite and beautiful. It was never trained to pity, to love what is unlovable."

"Sleepy, Nurse?" said a gentle voice. Dasha turned her head.

The bearded Semyon was looking at her from his bed.

"Why aren't you asleep?" she asked.

"I slept in the daytime."

"Does your arm hurt?"

"Not now. . . . Nurse!"

"What?"

"What a wee face yours is—you must be sleepy. Why don't you go and have a nap? I'll keep watch—I'll call you if necessary."

"I'm not a bit sleepy."

"Have you got anyone at the front?"

"My sweetheart."

"Never mind—God will take care of him."

"He's among the missing."

"Dear, dear!" Semyon's beard wagged as he sighed. "My younger brother was missing, and then we got a letter from him—he was a prisoner. And is your sweetheart a good man?"

"A very good man!"

"Perhaps I've heard of him. What's his name?"

"Ivan Ilyich Telegin."

"I've heard of him. Wait a bit! I have! People said he was taken prisoner. What regiment?"

"The Kazan."

"That's the man! He was taken prisoner. He's alive! Such a nice man! Never mind, Nurse, have patience! The snow will melt, the war will come to an end, there'll be peace. You'll bear him sons yet, believe me!"

The tears rose in Dasha's throat as she listened. She knew

that Semyon had made it all up, that he did not know Ivan Ilyich, but she felt grateful to him.

"Poor little thing!" said Semyon softly.

In the staff room once more, her cheek against the back of the armchair, Dasha felt as if she, a stranger, had been lovingly accepted, as if a voice had said: "Be one of us!" And now she felt that she was capable of pitying all those sick and sleeping men. And then, pitying, thinking, she suddenly visualized with shattering clarity Ivan Ilyich, too, lying somewhere on a narrow cot, just like these men, sleeping, breathing. . . .

She began pacing up and down the room. Suddenly the telephone rang. Dasha started violently, so harsh and jarring was the sound in the drowsy stillness. Probably another train arrived with wounded.

She said "hullo" into the receiver, and a woman's voice, tender and excited, spoke in her ear.

"May I speak to Darya Dmitrevna Bulavina?"

"It's me!" replied Dasha, and her heart began to beat violently. "Who's speaking? Katya? Katyusha? Is it you? Oh, darling!"

## \* XIX \*

"So here we are together again, girls," said Nikolai Ivanovich, tugging his suède jacket over his stomach, and taking Ekaterina Dmitrevna by the chin to imprint a hearty kiss on her cheek. "Good morning, ducky—how did you sleep?"

Passing Dasha's seat, he kissed her hair.

"Dasha and I are inseparable now, Katyusha. She's a brick—a real worker!"

He seated himself at the table, on which was a clean cloth, reached for an egg in a china eggcup, and sliced off the top with a knife.

"Fancy, Katyusha—I've got to like eggs done the English way, with mustard and butter. Try it—it's awfully nice. The Germans only get one egg per head every two weeks. What d'you think of that?"

He opened his great mouth in a laugh.

"This egg will be Germany's undoing. They say the children are being born there with one layer of skin short. Bismarck told them, the fools, that they must keep peace with

Russia. They didn't heed him, they were contemptuous of us, and now—they get an egg a fortnight!"

"It's terrible that children should be born without a skin," said Ekaterina Dmitrevna, lowering her eyes. "It's terrible wherever they're born—here or in Germany."

"Excuse me, Katya, but you're talking nonsense!"

"All I know is that it's not worth living if it's to be killing, killing every day."

"What's to be done, my dear? We've got to learn by personal experience what it means to belong to a state. Up to now we only read in the works of Ilovaisky and other historians how certain peasants fought for their land in the battles of Kulikovo,\* Borodino,\*\* and so on. We used to look at the map and say: 'What a vast country Russia is!' And now we have to bestir ourselves to give such and such a percentage of lives for the preservation of all that territory painted green on the map straight across Europe and Asia. And we don't like it. Of course, if you say our state mechanism is bad, I shan't contradict you. Now, before going to die for the State, I ask: 'And you, who are sending me to my death, are you yourselves the embodiment of state wisdom? Can I shed my blood for my country with complete confidence?' Yes, Katyusha, the government, out of sheer habit, still look askance at social organizations, but it has long been obvious that they can't do without us. Let them try! Give us an inch, and we'll take an ell! I'm very optimistic about it all."

Nikolai Ivanovich rose, took a matchbox from the mantelpiece, lit a cigarette, still standing, and dropped the burnt match into his egg shell.

"Blood will not have been shed in vain. The war will end in our sort of people—the social workers—taking the helm of State. The war will do what the 'Land and Freedom' group, the revolutionaries and the Marxists were unable to do. Goodbye, girls!"

He tugged at his jacket and went out; from behind he was like a stout woman disguised as a man.

Ekaterina Dmitrevna sighed and sat down at the window with her knitting. Dasha perched herself on the arm of the

\* On Kulikovo Field the Russian troops led by Prince D. I. Dolgorukii won a brilliant victory over the hordes of Khan Mamai.

\*\* Borodino Field—the greatest battle in the war of 1812 terminating in the defeat of Napoleon's army, was fought here.



chair and put one of her arms round her sister's shoulders. They were both wearing high-necked black dresses, now, and they were very like one another as they sat quiet and silent side by side. The snow was steadily falling, and the cold bright light was reflected on the walls of the room. Dasha put her cheek against Katya's hair, which smelt faintly of unfamiliar perfume.

"Katya, what have you been doing all this time? You never tell me anything."

"What is there to tell you, Puss? I wrote to you."

"Still, Katya, I don't understand. You're lovely, you're fascinating, you're sweet. I've never seen anyone like you. Yet you're never happy. Your eyes are always sad."

"I have an unhappy heart, I suppose."

"No, but seriously. . . ."

"It's what puzzles me all the time, child. It looks as if one can only be properly unhappy when one has everything. I have a good husband, a beloved sister, freedom. . . . And I live as if in a mirage and go about like a ghost. I remember when I was in Paris I used to think: 'If only I could live in some remote little town, and tend poultry and vegetables, and go to meet my sweetheart at sundown by the river! . . . ' Oh, Dasha, my life is over!"

"Don't talk nonsense, Katya!"

"You know," said Katya, looking at her sister from eyes which seemed to have turned dark and blank, "I can see *that* day so clearly . . . the striped mattress, the slipping sheet, the basin full of bile. . . . And there I lie, dead, yellow-skinned, with grey hair. . . ."

Putting down her knitting, Katya looked out of the window at the snowflakes falling in the calm stillness. Far away, beneath the pointed roof of a turret in the Kremlin straddled over by a golden eagle, the crows circled like a cloud of black leaves.

"I remember getting up very early one morning, Dasha. I could see the whole of Paris from the balcony, wrapped in a sort of blue haze, with columns of smoke, white, grey, blue, rising everywhere. It had rained in the night, and there was a delicious cool smell, leafy and spicy. In the streets were children with books, and women with baskets, and the provision shops were just opening. It all looked so solid and eternal. I wanted to go down there, to mix with the crowds, to

meet a man with kind eyes and put my hand on his breast. But when I went down into the Big Boulevards, the whole town was beginning to go mad. Newspaper boys were rushing about, everywhere people were standing around in excited groups. The papers were full of the fear of death, and of hate. The war had begun. And ever since I have heard nothing but the word death, death. . . . What else is there to look forward to?"

After a moment's silence, Dasha said:

"Katyusha!"

"What is it, my pet?"

"What about you and Nikolai?"

"It's hard to say. We seem to have made it up. Look—three days have gone by and he's ever so sweet to me. This is no time for dwelling on old hurts. One may suffer, go mad—who cares about that now? One buzzes like a gnat, and can hardly hear oneself. I envy old women. Everything's simple for them—they have only to prepare themselves for death."

Dasha fidgeted on the arm of the chair, sighed deeply once or twice, and took her arm away from Katya's shoulders.

"Dashenka," said Katya gently, "Nikolai Ivanovich tells me you're engaged. Is it true? Poor darling!"

She took Dasha's hand, kissed it, placed it on her breast, and fell to stroking it.

"I'm sure Ivan Ilyich is alive," she continued. "If you really love him there's nothing else in the world you need."

The sisters again fell silent, looking through the window at the falling snow. A platoon of cadets, each with a change of linen and a bunch of twigs beneath his armpit, was moving down the street between the piled snow, the soles of their boots slipping over the frozen surface. They were being marched to the bathhouse. As they passed the window they sang in chorus, each line ending with a triumphant whistling:

*Rise, ye hawks, and soar like eagles,  
Cease to sorrow, cease to mourn. . . .*

A day or two later Dasha began going to the hospital again. Katya remained alone in the flat, where everything was strange to her: the two dull landscapes on the wall, depicting a haystack, and a pool of melting snow between naked birch trees; photographs of unknown individuals over

the drawing-room sofa; and a sheaf of dusty feather grass in one corner.

Ekaterina Dmitrevna tried going to the theatre, where veteran performers acted Ostrovsky, or to exhibitions, to museums, where everything seemed to her pale, faded, languishing, and she herself a shade wandering through a deserted world.

She spent hours seated at the window, next to the hot-water pipes, looking out on snowy tranquil Moscow, where melancholy bells sounded in the soft air, through the falling snow, ringing to a memorial service, or to the funeral of someone brought back from the front. The book would drop from her hands. What was there to read about—to dream about? How futile all former dreams and thoughts now seemed!

The passage of time was marked by the morning and evening newspapers. It was obvious to Katya that everyone around her lived only in the future, in some imaginary days of victory and peace. Anything which confirmed these expectations was received with exaggerated rejoicings, while setbacks caused general dejection. People pounced like maniacs upon rumours, snatches of talk, the most improbable scraps of news, and blazed with excitement over phrases in the newspapers.

At last Katya came to a decision within herself, and asked her husband to get her work of some sort. Early in March she began working in the hospital where Dasha worked.

At first the dirt and suffering repelled her just as they had repelled Dasha. But she took herself in hand and gradually became interested in the work. This self-mastery was in itself a joy. For the first time she felt in touch with life around her. She grew to love the hard, dirty work, and to pity those for whom she worked. Once she said to Dasha:

"Who started the idea that we ought to have a special, refined life? You and I are just women, after all. What we need is an ordinary husband, a houseful of children, and the simple life."

In Holy Week Katya took the hospital *paskha*\* to be blessed, and broke her fast with Dasha in the hospital. Nikolai

\* Concoction of cream cheese and raisins, made at Easter.

Ivanovich had an extraordinary session to attend that night, and called for the sisters after two in the morning, in a car. Katya said that neither she nor Dasha was sleepy, and asked him to take them for a drive. It was a ridiculous idea, of course, but they gave the chauffeur a glass of brandy and drove out to the Khodinskoye Field.

There was a slight frost—just enough to make the cheeks tingle. The sky was cloudless, with a few bright stars twinkling here and there. The thin ice crackled beneath the wheels. Katya and Dasha, both wearing white shawls and grey coats, pressed close against one another on the deep seat. Nikolai Ivanovich, who sat next to the chauffeur, kept looking back from one to the other, struck by the similarity of their black eyebrows and great eyes.

"Honestly, I don't know which of you is my wife," he said softly.

One of them replied: "You'll never guess," and both laughed.

Over the vast, dim field the sky was just turning green at the horizon, and the black outlines of Silver Woods began to appear in the distance.

"I wish I could fall in love, Katyusha," said Dasha softly.

Katya pressed her arm gently. Over the woods, in the moist, green dawn, shone a great star, shimmering like a beating pulse.

"I quite forgot to tell you, Katya," said Nikolai Ivanovich, turning right round in the seat, "Chumakov, our representative, has just come, and he says the position in Galicia seems to be extremely critical. The Germans are pouring out such hurricanes of gunfire on us, that whole regiments are being wiped out at a time. And we, forsooth, are short of shells! It's a disgrace!"

Katya, for all reply, raised her eyes to the stars. Dasha pressed her cheek against her sister's shoulder. Nikolai Ivanovich indulged in another outburst of execration, and told the chauffeur to turn home.

On the third day of Easter Katya felt unwell. She was unable to go to the hospital, and was obliged to take to her bed. It appeared she had pneumonia, caused, no doubt, by getting in a draught.

"We're in such a mess—it's awful to think of it!"

"You've been mugging over the fire long enough, go to bed!"

"Such a mess. . . Russia's going to the dogs, fellows!"

Beside the mud wall of a shed with a high pointed thatch, three soldiers sat in front of the smouldering remains of a campfire. One of them had hung his leg wrappings to dry on pegs stuck in the ground, and was watching to see that they did not catch fire; another was putting a patch on his trousers, conscientiously plying his needle; while the third, pock-marked, hook-nosed, with a sparse black beard was seated cross-legged on the ground, his hands deep in the pockets of his army coat, staring into the embers with wild, hollow eyes.

"There's treachery all round, that's what it is," he said quietly. "No sooner do we gain the slightest advantage, than the order comes to retreat. All we do is to hang the Jews from the lower branches, while treachery is safely nested at the top."

"I'm sick to death of this war—but they'll never print *that* in the papers," said the soldier drying his leg wrappings, and he cautiously put a dry twig on the embers.

"First we attack, then we retreat, attack again—damn it all!—and back to where we started from, in the same order. And all for nothing!" He spat into the flame.

"Lieutenant Zhadov comes up to me the other day," grinned the soldier who was mending his trousers, never lifting his head from his work. "I suppose he's bored to hell. So he starts nagging at me. Why is there a hole in my pants? And why do I hold myself the way I do? I say nothing. And our conversation ends in his giving me a punch in the jaw."

To this the soldier drying his leg wrappings replied:

"No rifles, nothing to shoot with! In our battery we only have seven shells for each gun. They have nothing else to do but knock our teeth out!"

The man mending his trousers looked up in surprise and shook his head in shocked sympathy.

The dark one with the wild eyes said:

"They're calling up everybody. Now they're taking men of forty-three. The whole world could be conquered with

such numbers. And don't we do our bit? You do your job, we'll do ours!"

The man mending his trousers nodded.

"That's right!"

"I saw a field near Warsaw," continued the dark man. "There were five or six thousand Siberian riflemen lying on it. All dead, like so many sheaves of corn lying there. Why? What for? I'll tell you why. . . . They decide this and that at the military council, and immediately after a general goes out and secretly sends a telegram to Berlin—secretly. See? Two Siberian corps are marched straight from the station, straight to that field, to be cut down by machine guns. And you complain of a sock in the jaw! Why, when I didn't yoke the horse properly, my father used to hit me in the face, and quite right, too. You've got to be taught, and learn the fear of God. But why should all those Siberian riflemen be led like sheep to the slaughter? I tell you, fellows, Russia is ruined, we have been betrayed. And it was one of our own peasants who betrayed us, a countryman of mine, from the village of Pokrovskoye, a tramp. I won't even name him. He's an ignorant fellow, but he's smooth-faced, and he's up to all sorts of tricks; he stopped working, began stealing horses, got mixed up with Raskolniki, took to women and drink. . . . And now he's in Petersburg, as good as the tsar himself, with ministers and generals dancing attendance on him. We are being slaughtered, we lay ourselves down by the thousand in the damp earth, and Petersburg is blazing with electricity. Drinking, guzzling—all of them oozing fat."

Suddenly he broke off. It was still and damp, the horses champed in the shed, one of them kicked the wall with a hollow thud. A night bird swooped towards the fire from the roof, and disappeared with a plaintive cry. And at the same moment, from far away, came a deafening roar, ever nearer and nearer, as if some wild beast were rushing forward at incredible speed, rending the darkness with its muzzle, and something prodded the earth, and beyond the shed an explosion thundered out, making the ground shake. The horses stamped, their halters jingling. The soldier who had been mending his trousers said nervously:

"There she goes!"

"There's a gun for you!"

"Just you wait!"

All three raised their heads. Another sound mounted for the space of about two minutes into the starless sky, and from somewhere quite near, on their side of the shed, thundered a second explosion, the pointed tops of the firs sprang out in relief, and once more the ground shook. Immediately after, could be heard the passage of a third shell. It came with a maddening, gulping sound, so intolerable that the hearers' hearts seemed to stop. The dark soldier rose and started backing. Something swooped down, like dark lightning, and a column, black and fiery, flew upwards with a rending clatter.

When the column sank there was a deep hole where the fire and the three men had been. Over the twisted wall of the shed the straw thatch was a mass of yellow smoke. A horse with a long mane galloped snorting through the flames, making a swerving rush for the pine trees silhouetted against the sky.

And now, beyond the indented edge of the plain, lightning winked, guns roared, rockets flew up trailing snakelike tails, their flames, slowly falling, lighting up the damp, dark earth. Shells punctured the sky, wailing and roaring.

## \* XXI \*

That same evening, not far from the shed, in an officers' dugout, the officers of a company of the Usolsk Regiment were holding a party to celebrate the news received by Captain Tetkin of the birth of a son. Deep down below the earth, eight officers, a doctor, and three nurses from the field hospital, were seated at a table in a low cellar protected by three layers of flooring overhead, and lit by tallow candles stuck in glasses.

They had all had a great deal to drink. The proud father, Captain Tetkin, was asleep with his head on a plate of scraps, one grubby fist pendant over his bald head. Thanks to the closeness, the liquor consumed, and the soft light of the candles, the nurses, in grey dresses and head kerchiefs, seemed quite pretty. One, who was called Mushka, and had a black curl over each temple, laughed incessantly, displaying her white throat, at which the men on either side of her, and the two sitting opposite, stared fixedly. Another, Marya

Ivanovna, plump and red-faced, could sing gipsy ballads to a marvel. Her hearers banged on the table in their frenzy, exclaiming again and again: "Damn it! Those were the days!" The third nurse was Elizaveta Kievna. She saw the flames of the candles as quivering points of light, multiplied indefinitely, and through the haze of smoke the faces around the table were white patches, while one of them—that of her neighbour, Lieutenant Zhadov—seemed to have something that was at once terrifying and attractive about it. He was broad-shouldered, fair, clean-shaven, with pale, luminous eyes. He sat bolt upright, his belt drawn in smartly; he had been drinking heavily, but showed it only by an increasing pallor. When the black-haired Mushka dissolved into giggles, when Marya Ivanovna picked up her guitar, mopped her face with a crumpled handkerchief, and began singing in a deep voice: "I was born in the steppe of Moldavia," Zhadov gave a slow smile from the corner of his straight-cut lips, and poured himself out another glass of spirits.

Elizaveta Kievna peered into his smooth, unlined face. He entertained her with conventional gossip, telling her, among other things, that there was a certain Captain Martinov in their regiment who enjoyed the reputation of a fatalist, and when he had been drinking brandy he would cross the barbed wire, get within range of enemy fire, and abuse the Germans in four languages. But a few days ago he had paid for his vaingloriousness with an abdominal wound. Sighing, Elizaveta Kievna said that Captain Martinov must be a hero. Zhadov grinned:

"Excuse me—there are ambitious people, and there are fools, but there are no heroes."

"And when you go to the attack—isn't that heroism?"

"To begin with, people don't *go* to the attack—they're *sent* to the attack, and they go because they're cowards. There are, of course, people who risk their lives without any compulsion, but these are men with an inherent desire to kill." Zhadov drummed on the table with the points of his tough nails. "Such people, if you like, have reached the height of mental development, according to modern standards."

Rising lightly to his feet, he reached out for a big box of fruit jellies from the far corner of the table, and offered it to Elizaveta Kievna.



"No, thank you, I don't want any," she said, conscious that her heart was beating violently, and her body was going limp. "And what about you, yourself? Tell me."

Zhadov wrinkled his forehead, his face breaking into unexpected lines which made it look quite old.

"About myself?" he echoed harshly. "Yesterday I shot a Jew behind the shed. Would you like to know if that's a pleasant experience? What rot!"

He clamped a cigarette between his sharp teeth and struck a match; but though the spatulate fingers which held it were steady, the cigarette did not get into the flame, could not get lighted.

"Sorry, I'm drunk!" he said, throwing away the match, which had burned down to the tips of his fingers. "Let's go out into the air!"

Elizaveta Kievna rose as though in her sleep, and followed him to the narrow opening leading from the dugout. They were pursued by gay, drunken voices, and Marya Ivanovna, plucking at the strings of her guitar, drawled out in her deep voice: "The night breathes the sweetness of passion."

Outside, there was a pungent smell of the decay that heralds spring, and all was darkness and quiet. Zhadov strode rapidly over the wet grass, his hands thrust in his pockets. Elizaveta Kievna kept a little behind him, smiling as if unable to stop. Suddenly he came to a standstill and said abruptly:

"Well, what about it?"

Her ears burned. Controlling a spasm rising in her throat, she replied almost inaudibly: "I don't know."

"Come on!"

Nodding towards the denser darkness of the shed, he went on a few steps, then stopped and took Elizaveta Kievna's hands in an icy grasp.

"I'm built like a god," he said with surprising passion. "I can break silver coins in two. I see right through people just as if they were made of glass. I hate them!" He broke off as if remembering something, and stamped his foot. "All that giggling and singing and cowardly talk—it's hateful. They're like maggots in warm dung, all of them. I'll crush them.... Listen! I don't love you, I can't! I'm not going to love you... don't flatter yourself! But I need you.... This feeling of dependence—I can't stand it.... You ought to understand...." He thrust his hands beneath Elizaveta Kievna's

elbows, drew her forcibly towards him and pressed against her temple lips as dry and hot as a burning coal.

She tugged hard to free herself, but he held her so tight that her bones seemed to be snapping, and she let her head droop, hanging with all her weight from his arms.

"You're not like those others, the rest of them," he said. "I'll teach you...."

Suddenly he fell silent, raising his head.

A sharp, piercing sound gathered volume in the darkness.

"Damn!" exclaimed Zhadov through clenched teeth.

The next moment there was an explosion in the distance. Elizaveta Kievna gave another tug, but Zhadov's grasp became still stronger.

"Let me go!" she cried frantically.

Another shell exploded. Zhadov was still muttering when a black column streaked with flame shot up quite near them, just behind the shed, the crash of the explosion sending tufts of straw high into the air.

Elizaveta Kievna wrenched herself from his grasp and rushed to the dugout. The officers were hastily clambering out of it. Casting backward glances at the burning shed, they raced over the uneven surface of the ground, accentuated by the slanting rays of light, some to the left, towards the wood where the trenches were, others to the right, making for the communication trench leading to the bridgehead. The German batteries were booming away on the other side of the river, well beyond the hills. The firing came from two places, from the right at the bridge, and from the left at the ford leading to a farmstead recently occupied on the other side by a company of the Usolsk Regiment. Some of their fire was directed at the Russian batteries.

Elizaveta Kievna saw Zhadov, hatless, his hands in his pockets, striding straight across the field towards the machine-gun emplacement. The next moment there was a blurred circle of smoke and fire where he had been. Elizaveta Kievna closed her eyes. When she opened them again Zhadov was walking more to the left, his elbows still swaying jauntily. Captain Tetkin, standing beside Elizaveta Kievna with his field glasses to his eyes, shouted furiously:

"I told them we didn't need that blasted farmstead! Now look what they've done! Mucked up the whole ford, the swine!"

He took another look through the field glasses.

"The swine—they're firing right at the farmstead. Company Six is lost." He groaned as he turned away, scratching hard at the bare nape of his neck. "Shlyapkin!"

"Here, Sir!" replied Shlyapkin smartly. He was a small man with a big nose, and a Cossack cap on his head.

"Did you get the farmstead?"

"The wires are cut!"

"Tell Company Eight to send reinforcements to the farmstead."

"Very good, Sir!" replied Shlyapkin. Removing his hand from the side of his head with a crisp movement, he walked a few paces and stopped.

"Lieutenant Shlyapkin!" shouted the captain again, in ferocious tones.

"Yes, Sir!"

"Kindly obey orders!"

"Very good, Sir!"

Shlyapkin walked on a few more paces, and his head bent, fell to digging at the earth with his cane.

"Lieutenant Shlyapkin!"

"Here, Sir!"

"Do you understand when you're spoken to?"

"Yes, Sir!"

"Give the order to Company Eight. You can tell them not to obey it, on your own. They'll know better themselves than to send men there. Let them send a dozen men to the ford, to return the enemy's fire. And you send word to the division that Company Eight is gallantly fording the crossing. We can cite the casualties in Company Six. Go! And you clear out, young lady," he said, turning to Elizaveta Kievna. "Get the hell out of here, firing will begin in a minute."

At that moment a shell reared itself with a hiss and struck something in the neighbourhood.

## \* XXII \*

Zhadov lay at the embrasure of the machine-gun emplacement eagerly watching the battle from his field glasses, which he never lowered for a moment. The pillbox was dug in the slope of a wooded hill, round the foot of which the

News had been received from the front of the firing on the ford and bridge. The General realized that the Germans intended to occupy the farmstead, the very place on which he had based his famous plan for an offensive, a plan approved by the Corps Headquarters, and submitted to the Army Commander. By their attack on the farmstead the Germans had upset the whole plan.

Every minute came telephonograms confirming the report. Removing his pince-nez from the bridge of his large nose, the General said, calmly but firmly, toying with the glasses:

"Good! I shall not budge an inch from the position I have occupied." A telephonogram was immediately sent, prescribing measures to be taken for the defence of the farmstead. The Kundravin Reserve Regiment was ordered to dispatch two battalions to reinforce Tetkin at the ford. Just then word was received from the commander of a heavy battery, that the supply of shells was giving out, that one gun was out of action already, and that it was impossible to return the enemy's hurricane fire adequately.

To this, General Dobrov, glancing severely at the faces around him, said:

"Good! When the shells give out we will fight with cold steel."

And drawing a handkerchief of dazzling whiteness from the pocket of his grey, red-lapelled tunic, he shook it out, wiped his pince-nez, and bent over the map.

At that moment there appeared in the doorway Junior Adjutant Count Bobruisky, in a uniform of dark khaki which fitted him like a glove.

"Your Excellency," he said, with a faint smile on his fine, youthful lips, "Captain Tetkin sends word that the Eighth Company is gallantly fording the river, despite the enemy's destructive fire."

The General glanced at him through his pince-nez, made a chewing motion, twitching his clean-shaven upper lip, and said:

"Very good."

Despite the cheerful note sounded, reports from the front grew more and more disconcerting. The Kundravin Regiment, arriving at the ford, had entrenched itself there. Company Eight was continuing its gallant efforts to ford the river, but had not yet got across. Captain Islambekov, com-

mander of a mortar division, sent word that two of his guns were out of action, and that shells were giving out. Colonel Borozdin, commander of the First Battalion of the Usolsk Regiment, announced that, owing to the exposed position companies Two, Three and Four had sustained heavy casualties. He therefore asked permission either to attack and overthrow the insolent foe or to retreat to the outskirts of the wood. No information was received from Company Six, which was occupying the farmstead.

A military council was called at two-thirty a. m. General Dobrov said he would lead the troops entrusted to him himself, rather than yield an inch of occupied territory. Just then the news came that the farmstead had been taken and Company Six completely wiped out. The General crushed his cambric handkerchief in his fist and closed his eyes. Staff Commander Colonel Svechin shrugged his fat shoulders, and, said hoarsely but distinctly, the blood rushing into his fleshy, black-bearded countenance:

"I have several times drawn Your Excellency's attention to the fact that it was risky to take up a position on the right bank. We shall lose two, three, perhaps four battalions at the ford, and even if we do recapture the farmstead, it will be a matter of the utmost difficulty to hold it."

"We require a bridgehead—we must have one, and we will have it," said General Dobrov, beads of sweat breaking out on his nose. "If we lose the bridgehead my plan for an offensive will be an utter failure."

Colonel Svechin, redder than ever, insisted:

"Your Excellency, under such terrific firing, the troops, inadequately supported by artillery, are physically unable to make the crossing, and the artillery, as you are aware, is unable, owing to lack of shells, to support them."

To this the General replied:

"Good. In that case, inform the troops that there are St. George crosses hanging on the wire entanglements on the other side of the river. I know my soldiers."

Having uttered words so worthy of perpetuation, the General rose, dangling the gold-rimmed pince-nez behind his back between his stubby fingers, and looked out of the window, through which, in the tender blue of the morning mist, could be seen a dripping birch tree rising from the meadow. A flock of sparrows alighted on its thin branches,

chirped for a few minutes in a nervous bustle, and flew away as suddenly as they had arrived. The whole misty meadow with its vague outlines of trees, was now gilded by the slanting rays of the sun.

By sunrise the battle was over. The Germans had occupied the farmstead and the left bank of the stream. Nothing remained of the Russian position but the low-lying lands on the right side, where Company One was entrenched. Languid firing went on across the stream all day, but it was evident that Company One was in danger of encirclement, having no direct communications with their own side now that the bridge was destroyed. Obviously the most rational thing would have been to clear out of the swamp that very night.

But in the afternoon Colonel Borozdin, commander of the First Battalion, received instructions to prepare to ford the stream at nightfall, so as to reach the swamp and go to the reinforcement of Company One. Captain Tetkin was ordered to concentrate forces drawn from companies Five and Seven below the farmstead and cross on pontoons. The Third Reserve Usolsk Battalion was to take up an offensive position. The Kundravin Regiment was to ford the stream at a shallow place near the burned bridge, and deliver a frontal attack.

This was a definite order, and the disposition was quite clear. The farmstead was to be attacked in a pincer movement—the first battalion taking the right, the second, the left—while the Kundravin Reserve Regiment engaged the attention and drew the fire of the enemy. The attack was timed for midnight.

At dusk Zhadov went to see the machine guns placed at the crossing; one was rowed over with the utmost precautions to a small islet of some hundred square feet, overgrown with osiers. Zhadov himself stayed with it.

All day the Russian batteries had maintained a languid fire on the farmstead and beyond—on the positions taken up in the direction of the river by the Germans. Here and there solitary rifle shots rang out over the water. The crossing was begun at midnight and in silence, in three places at once. A section of the Belotserkovsky Regiment, posted some three miles upstream, opened lively firing to draw the enemy's fire, but the Germans maintained a guarded silence.

Parting the intricate web of willow branches, Zhadov watched the crossing. A yellow star hung motionless, low over the wooded hills to the right, its blurred reflection trembling on the dark surface of the water in a narrow strip of light, intersected now and then by dark objects. Running figures showed themselves on sandy islets and reefs. Not far from Zhadov, about a dozen were moving with subdued splashings, up to their chests in water, their rifles and cartridge pouches held in their uplifted arms. These were men from the Kundravin Regiment fording the river.

All of a sudden, far away on the other side, rapid firing was heard, shells flew whistling by, while the pop-pop of shrapnel burst with metallic reports high over the river. Each explosion illuminated bearded countenances rising above the water. The sandbank swarmed with men running hither and thither. Popping sounds announced a fresh round of firing. The air was rent with cries. Rockets soared over the sky, emitting dazzling flames. The Russian batteries thundered. The current bore a writhing man right up to Zhadov's feet. He kept crying "My head! My head!" in a smothered voice, and catching at the willow branches. Zhadov flew to the other side of the islet. In the distance, pontoons filled with men were moving across the river, and the units which had already crossed could be seen running over the field. Just as yesterday, a veritable hurricane of fire raged over the river, the crossing and the hills. The seething waters seemed to be alive with worms—the writhing figures of soldiers clambering and shouting amidst black and yellow clouds of smoke and waterspouts. Those who got to the other bank began to climb ashore. Zhadov's machine guns clattered away in the rear. In front, Russian shells kept bursting. Both Captain Tetkin's companies maintained a cross-fire at the farmstead. The advance units of the Kundravin Regiment, which had, as subsequently appeared, lost half their men at the crossing, attempted to make a bayonet attack, but the attack bogged down, and the men crouched beneath the barbed-wire entanglements. From beyond the stream, among the reeds, the First Battalion rushed forward in close formation. The Germans came pouring out of their trenches.

Lying beside his machine gun, and hanging on desperately to the wildly vibrating lock, Zhadov maintained a grazing fire at a grassy mound beyond the German trenches over

which men were running in ones and twos and in groups, only to stumble one after another, and fall prostrate.

"Fifty-eight, sixty," counted Zhadov.

A frail figure rose, clutching at its head, and staggered down the slope. Zhadov turned the nozzle of the machine gun, the figure dropped to its knees, and fell. "Sixty-one." Suddenly an intolerable, searing light flashed across his eyes, and Zhadov was lifted into the air. There was a tearing pain in his arm.

The farmstead and the whole line of trenches adjoining it were captured. About two hundred prisoners were taken. By daylight, artillery fire had ceased on both sides. The wounded and killed were being gathered up. While searching the islets, the ambulance men found an overturned machine gun among the shattered osiers, and near-by, half-buried in the sand, a private with the back of his head blown off. Some twenty feet away, on the other side of the islet, lay Zhadov, his legs in the water. When they picked him up, he groaned. A pinkish bone projected from his blood-encrusted sleeve. When they brought Zhadov into the field hospital the doctor called out to Elizaveta Kievna:

"They've brought in your young man. Get him on to the table at once!"

Zhadov was unconscious, his nose peaked, his lips black. When his shirt was removed, Elizaveta Kievna caught sight of the tattooing on his broad chest—monkeys with their tails entwined. During the operation he clenched his teeth, convulsions passing over his face.

When the torture was over, and the wound dressed, he opened his eyes. Elizaveta Kievna bent over him. "Sixty-one," he said.

Zhadov raved till morning, when he sank into a peaceful sleep. Elizaveta Kievna asked permission to take him to the big hospital attached to the divisional staff.

### \* XXIII \*

Dasha came into the dining room. Nikolai Ivanovich and Dmitri Stepanovich (the latter had arrived two days before summoned from Samara by an express telegram) left off



talking at her entrance. Holding her white shawl together under her chin, Dasha glanced at the red countenance and dishevelled hair of her father, who had one leg drawn up beneath him as he sat, and at Nikolai Ivanovich, with his distorted face and inflamed eyelids. Dasha sat down at the table beside them. Through the window the clear, thin outlines of the sickle moon could be seen in the bluish dark.

Dmitri Stepanovich was smoking, letting the ash drop into his shaggy waistcoat. Nikolai Ivanovich was busily scraping crumbs into a heap on the tablecloth. For a long time no one spoke.

At last Nikolai Ivanovich said in a choking voice:

"Why has everybody left her? We can't do that."

"You sit there—I'll go," said Dasha, getting up. She no longer felt either pain or fatigue.

Holding her shawl against her mouth, she said: "Do give her another injection, Papa!"

Dmitri Stepanovich sniffed loudly and flung the burnt-out cigarette over his shoulder. The floor all round him was strewn with cigarette ends.

"Just one more, Papa—do!"

At this Nikolai Ivanovich exclaimed, his voice exasperated and unnatural:

"She can't go on living on camphor. She's dying, Dasha."

Dasha turned on him violently.

"Don't you dare to say that! Don't you dare! She shan't die!"

Nikolai Ivanovich's sallow face twitched. He turned towards the window, and, like Dasha, looked at the thin, piercing sickle moon in the blue expanse.

"This is hell," he said. "If she dies, I simply can't...." Dasha passed through the drawing room on tiptoe, taking another glance through the window, beyond which reigned eternal, icy cold, and slipped into Katya's bedroom, where a night light scarcely conquered the darkness.

Far back in the room lay the small face, motionless as before, on the pillows of the wide, low bed, the dry, dulled hair combed upwards, the narrow hand a little lower down. Dasha dropped to her knees beside the bed. Katya's breathing was almost inaudible. After a while she spoke in a low, plaintive voice.

"What's the time?"

"Eight, Katya darling."

Drawing a sharp breath, Katya repeated her question, as plaintively as before, like a complaint:

"What's the time?"

She had been repeating this over and over again the whole day. Her semitransparent face was calm, the eyes closed. She had been walking over the soft carpet of the long yellow corridor for ages. It was all yellow, walls, ceilings, everything. High up on the right, a torturing yellowish light was pouring through dusty windows. On the left were a lot of flat doors. On the other side of them, if these were opened, would be the world's end, a chasm. Katya walked slowly as in a dream, past these doors, these dusty windows. In front stretched the long level corridor—all yellow. It was stifling in the corridor, and each door wafted deadly despair. When will the end come? Oh, God, when? Should she stop a moment, and listen? But there is nothing to listen to. Nothing but a deep humming sound from the darkness on the other side of the doors, like that made by the pendulum of a grandfather clock. . . . Ah, how dreary it all was! If only she could wake up . . . say something, anything—something simple and human. . . .

And with an enormous effort, Katya repeated querulously:

"What's the time?"

"Katya, what is it you want to know?"

(*Good. So Dasha is here. . .*) and once again the long carpet unrolled its soft nausea beneath her feet, the hard stifling glare came pouring through the dusty windows, the clock hummed in the distance. . . .

(*To hear nothing, to see nothing, to feel nothing. . . just to lie there buried in the bedclothes . . . if only the end would come soon. . . but Dasha won't let me, she prevents me from sleeping . . . she keeps holding my hand, kissing me, murmuring, murmuring . . . and something vital keeps pouring out of her into my light, hollow body . . . oh, dear, oh, dear . . . how can I explain to her how easy it is to die, easier than feeling that vital thing inside one . . . why can't she let me go?*)

"Katyusha, I love you, I love you! D'you hear me?"

(*She won't let me go, she can't bear to lose me. . . . So I mustn't die. . . . She'll be all alone, the child, all alone. . . .*)

"Dasha!"

"What is it? What is it?"

"I'm not going to die."

A smell of tobacco—that must be her father approaching. Now he is bending over her, turning back the blanket, and a needle sinks into her breast, bringing keen, sweet pain. A blessed moisture flows soothingly through her veins. The walls of the yellow corridor tremble and part, cool air streams in. Dasha is stroking the hand lying on the counterpane, pressing her lips to it, breathing warmth on it. Another minute, and her body will be dissolved in the sweet darkness of sleep. And then again come the sharp yellow dashes, edging their way out of the corners of her eyes . . . chirp, chirp . . . smug, coming alive of themselves, multiplying, and building up the awful, stifling corridor. . . .

"Dasha! Oh, Dasha! I don't want to go there!"

Dasha's arms about her head, Dasha beside her on the pillow, pressing her to herself, alive, strong . . . and pouring out of Dasha some burning, brutal force—"Live!"

And then again the corridor stretching out, and Katya knows she must rise and stagger down it with a ton weight attached to each foot. She can't lie down—Dasha will be sure to put her arms round her, raise her, and say: "Come!"

Thus, for three days and three nights, did Katya struggle with death. All the time she had in her the sensation of Dasha's passionate will, and but for Dasha she would long since have given up, exhausted.

Dasha never left the bedside all through the evening and night of the third day. The sisters seemed to have become fused in one being, sharing the same pain, animated by the same will. At last, at daybreak, Katya broke out into a profuse sweat, and turned over on her side. Her breathing was scarcely audible. Alarmed, Dasha called her father. There was nothing he could do, and they sat and waited. Just after six in the morning Katya sighed and turned on to the other side. The crisis was over, the return to life had begun.

And for the first time in all these days Dasha, too, slept, in the big armchair at the bedside. Nikolai Ivanovich, on hearing that Katya was out of danger, sobbed into Dmitri Stepanovich's shaggy waistcoat.

The day began happily. It was warm and sunny, and they all seemed to one another splendid people. A pot of white lilac sent in from the florist's was put in the drawing room. Dasha felt that she had dragged Katya with her own hands out of some cold black hole and eternal darkness. Nothing on earth was more precious than life—she realized that thoroughly now.

In the end of May Nikolai Ivanovich took Ekaterina Dmitrevna out of town, to a country cottage—a small log house with two verandahs, one facing a birch copse, through the continually stirring green shade of which roamed dappled calves, the other looking out on undulating fields.

Every evening Dasha and Nikolai Ivanovich left the suburban train at a halt between stations, and walked across the swampy meadow. Overhead the midges swarmed. Then they had to go uphill. Nikolai Ivanovich usually stopped here a moment, as if to admire the sunset.

"God, how beautiful!" he would exclaim, panting slightly.

Over the fast-darkening, rolling plain, its surface varied by fields of corn, by leafy nut glades, and by birch copses, hung the clouds which come at sunset—purple, motionless, sterile. The sunset glow showed dimly in their long rifts, and beneath them, quite near, a long, orange strip of sky was reflected in the bend of a stream. The frogs moaned and groaned. The haystacks and roofs of the village loomed dark against the flat fields. Somewhere in the fields a bonfire was burning. Over there, somewhere, beyond the slope and the high picket fence, the False Dmitri had once upon a time made his hiding place. A train would come into sight, with a prolonged whistle, carrying soldiers to the west, into the dim sunset.

Skirting the wood as they approached the house, Dasha and Nikolai Ivanovich could see, through the glass of the verandah, the table set for supper, and on it the frosted globe of the lamp. The dog Sharik would run to meet them, barking a polite welcome; having performed this duty, it would wag its tail and run off into the wormwood, there to finish its barking, out of people's way.

They would find Katya sitting drumming on the verandah windowpanes—she was not yet allowed out after dusk. Ni-

Nikolai Ivanovich, fastening the gate after him, would exclaim: "Say what you like—it's a charming little place!" And they would sit down to supper. Katya would give them an account of the local happenings: a mad dog had come from Tushino and bitten two of the Kishkin chickens; the Zhilkins had moved into the Simovs' cottage, and their samovar had instantly been stolen; the cook, Matryona, had whipped her son again.

Dasha would eat in silence—the day in town always left her exhausted. Nikolai Ivanovich, extracting a bundle of newspapers from his brief case, would settle down to read them, using his toothpick the while; when he came across anything unpleasant he made clicking noises with his tongue until Katya protested: "Please don't do that, Nikolai!" Dasha would go out into the porch, and sit down, chin propped on hand, letting her glance wander over the darkening plain, lit up here and there by bonfires, and watching the small summer stars come out. The smell of freshly watered flower beds rose from the small garden.

Nikolai Ivanovich, rustling his newspapers on the verandah, would say:

"The war can't go on much longer for the simple reason that we and our allies in the Entente will soon have exhausted our resources."

"Would you like some sour milk?" Katya would ask him.

"If it's really cold. . . . It's simply awful! We've lost Lvov and Lyublin. Disgraceful! How are we to fight when we are being stabbed in the back by traitors? It's incredible!"

"Nikolai, don't click with your tongue!"

"Do leave me alone! If we lose Warsaw, I don't know how we shall survive the disgrace. Sometimes one really can't help wondering if the best thing wouldn't be to call some sort of truce, and then turn our bayonets on Petersburg!"

From the distance came the whistle of a train. It could be heard rattling over the bridge across the stream which had so lately reflected the sunset—it must be carrying wounded to Moscow. Nikolai Ivanovich rustled his paper again:

"Troops are sent to the front without rifles, they lie in the trenches armed with nothing but sticks. Only one rifle to every five men. They go into action with those same sticks, in the hope of getting the rifle of the man next to them when he is killed. God! Ah, God!"

Dasha left the porch and stood leaning against the top of the wicket gate. The light from the verandah fell on the gleaming dock leaves at the fence, and on the road. Petya, Matryona's son, passed by with hanging head, reluctant and miserable. There was nothing left for him but to go back to the kitchen, be whipped, and go to bed.

Dasha went through the gate and walked slowly towards the river Khimka.

There, in the darkness, on the edge of the sloping bank, she fell to listening—from somewhere came the gurgle of a spring, a sound only to be heard in the stillness of night. A clod of earth from the dry bank rustled and fell with a splash into the water. All around stood the motionless forms of trees—their leaves rustled sleepily, and again all was still. "When, when, oh when?" said Dasha softly, and cracked her fingerjoints.

One Saint's day, in the beginning of June, Dasha got up early and went to have a wash in the kitchen, so as not to wake Katya. There was a heap of vegetables on the table, and on top of them a queer-looking greenish postcard—the greengrocer must have brought it from the post office with the newspapers. Matryona's son, Petya, was sitting in the doorway, sniffing and tying a chicken's leg to a stick. Matryona was hanging washing out on the branches of a laburnum.

Dasha poured water smelling of the river into an earthen bowl, let down her chemise, and took another look—what was that queer postcard? She picked it up in the wet tips of her fingers, and read: "Dear Dasha, I'm worried not to have had an answer to a single one of my letters. Can they all have got lost?"

Dasha sat down quickly—everything swam before her eyes, her legs felt wobbly. . . . " . . . My wound has quite healed. I do gymnastics every day now, and try to keep as fit as possible. And I am studying English and French. I send you a kiss, Dasha, if you remember me still. I. Telegin."

Dasha put her arms back into the shoulder straps of her chemise, and read the postcard again.

" 'If you remember me still. . . .' "

Jumping up, she rushed into Katya's bedroom and drew the print window curtains.

"Read it, Katya—read it aloud!"

But before the startled Katya could respond, Dasha seated herself on the side of the bed and read it herself, only to jump up again, clasping her hands violently in front of her.

"Oh, Katya, isn't it awful?"

"But at least he's alive, Dasha—that's something to be thankful for!"

"I love him! . . . Oh, God, what shall I do? . . . When will the war be over—when? Tell me that!"

Snatching up the postcard, Dasha rushed to Nikolai Ivanovich. After reading it to him she insisted frantically on a definite reply to her question: "When will the war be over?"

"No one can tell you that, my dear girl!"

"Then what do you do in your idiotic Municipal Union? You just talk a lot of gibberish from morning to night! I'll go straight up to town and see the Commander of the Troops. . . . I'll make him. . . ."

"What will you make him do? I'm afraid there's nothing for it but patience, Dasha darling!"

Dasha did not know what to do with herself for a day or two, but she soon quieted down, as if a light had been extinguished in her. In the evenings she went early to her room, where she wrote to Ivan Ilyich, and made up parcels for him, sewing them up in canvas. When Katya spoke to her about Telegin, Dasha usually said nothing; she gave up her evening walks, spending most of the time sitting beside Katya, sewing or reading. She seemed to wish to bury deep within her all feeling, to grow an invulnerable layer of protective, workaday skin.

Although Katya had made a complete recovery, like Dasha her flame burned low that summer. The sisters often told each other that they, and indeed everyone else nowadays, carried a ton weight about with them. Waking up, going about, thinking, meeting people, was an effort, they could hardly wait for night to come round, when, exhausted, they would stumble into bed. Their sole joy was to sleep and forget everything. There were the Zhilkins—the night before they had invited friends to try their newly made jam, and while they were at tea the papers had been brought, with Zhilkin's brother in the list of killed—perished on the field of glory. The hosts had gone into the house, and the guests,

after sitting for a while on the verandah in the dusk, silently went away. And it was the same everywhere.

The cost of living was rising. The future was dark and dispiriting. Warsaw had surrendered. Brest Litovsk had been blown up and fallen. Everywhere spies were being caught.

The steep banks above the river Khimka were infested with robbers. For a whole week people did not dare to enter the woods. Then the robbers were driven away from the banks by the police, two were caught, a third escaped—to the Zvenigorod district, it was said, to plunder the estates there.

One morning a droshky, the driver standing up to whip his horse on, drove madly up to an open space not far from the Smokovnikovs' cottage. Country women, servants, children, came running up to it from all directions. Something out of the ordinary must have happened. Some summer residents came out of their gardens. Matryona, wiping her hands, rushed down the garden path. The driver, hot and red, still standing up, was exclaiming:

"...they dragged him out of the office and tossed him up in the air and flung him down again on the paving stones, and then into the Moskva River, and there were still five Germans hiding in the factory.... They found three, but the police got them away, or they'd all have been thrown into the river the same way.... And there's silk and velvet flying about all over Lubyanskaya Square. Looting all over the town.... Everywhere masses of people...."

He whipped up his racing stallion, squatting forward between the curved shafts, urged on the horse with shouts and another crack of the whip, till the stallion, snorting and flecked with foam, galloped on with the rickety carriage, towards the tavern.

Dasha and Nikolai Ivanovich were in Moscow. A black column of smoke rose from the direction spreading into a cloud as it rose against the grey, hot, murky sky. The fire could be plainly seen from the village square, where the peasant folk gathered in groups. When any of the summer residents approached them, their talk was silenced. They looked at the gentry with something that might have been contempt, or merely a kind of strange expectancy. A burly fellow, hatless, in a torn blouse, approached the small brick shrine at the wayside, and shouted:



"They're killing Germans in Moscow!"

His shout was followed by cries from a pregnant woman. The crowd pushed towards the shrine, Katya following in its wake. The crowd was buzzing with agitation.

"The Warsaw Railway Station is burning, the Germans have set fire to it!"

"Two thousand Germans have been killed!"

"Six thousand—they've all been thrown into the river."

"They started with the Germans, and now they're going on. They say Kuznetsky Most\* has been quite cleaned out."

"Serve them right! They've been living on our toil long enough, the swine!"

"You can't stop the people!"

"In Petrovsky Park—my sister's just come from there—they found a wireless set in a house in the park, so help me! And two spies near-by, with false beards. They killed them of course."

"We ought to go to all the summer places, that's what!"

Some girls carrying empty sacks could be seen running down the hill, beside the dam, just where the road to Moscow passed. People began shouting to them. Turning, they waved their sacks and laughed.

"Where are those girls running to?" Ekaterina Dmitrevna asked an aged, dignified peasant with a tall staff, standing beside her.

"To loot, gracious lady."

Dasha and Nikolai Ivanovich arrived at last, between five and six, having driven all the way down in a droshky. They were both very excited, and described, constantly interrupting each other, how crowds had gathered all over Moscow, smashing up the dwellings and shops of Germans. A number of houses had been set fire to. Mandel's ready-made clothing store had been plundered. The Becker piano store on Kuznetsky Most had been destroyed, the pianos being thrown out of second-floor windows and flung on to a bonfire. Lubyanskaya Square was strewn with medicaments and broken glass. It was said murders had been committed. Patrols had been called out in the afternoon and the crowds were dispersed. Everything was now quiet again.

\* A street in Moscow with expensive shops, many of which were kept by foreigners.

"It's barbarism, of course," said Nikolai Ivanovich, blinking with excitement, "but I like the spirit, the power of the people. Today they loot German shops, tomorrow they may, for all we know, start building barricades. The government deliberately allowed this rioting to go on. I assure you they did, to enable the people to find an outlet for their wrath. But that's how the people acquire a taste for something more serious. . . ."

That very night the Zhilkins' cellar was plundered and the Svechnikovs had their washing stolen from the attic where it was drying. The tavern was lighted up all night. And for a whole week after, summer residents strolling through the village were pursued by strange glances and whispered words.

The Smokovnikovs returned to town in the beginning of August, and Katya once more took up her hospital work. This autumn Moscow was full of Polish refugees. It was almost impossible to move in the principal streets—Petrovka, Kuznetsky Most, and Tverskaya. The shops, cafés and theatres were crowded, and everywhere could be heard the newly minted phrase: "I beg *yours!*"

All this bustle and luxury—the crowded theatres and hotels, the noisy, brilliantly lit streets—was protected by the living wall of a twelve-million-strong army, bleeding from innumerable wounds.

And yet military affairs were in a far from prosperous state. Everywhere—at the front and at home—people were talking of the evil influence of Rasputin, of treachery, of the impossibility of going on fighting without a miracle from St. Nicholas.

And then suddenly, in the midst of all this depression and corruption, General Ruzsky stopped the advance of the German army in open field.

#### \* XXIV \*

The seashore was swept by the northeast wind in the autumn dusk. The leafless poplars bowed sideways beneath its impact. In the old house on the hilltop, with the wooden tower the frames of the windows shook, and the roof reverberated as if to the steps of a heavy being stalking over

its iron sheeting. The wind blew down the chimneys, beneath the doors, into every chink and crevice.

From the windows could be seen naked rose bushes tossing on the brown soil, and ragged clouds sailing over the furrowed, leaden sea. All was cold and dreary.

Arkady Zhadov was seated on a rickety sofa in the only habitable room in the house, on the second floor. The empty sleeve of his once elegant tunic was thrust into his belt. His eyelids were puffy, but he was carefully shaved and the parting in his hair was scrupulously straight. A muscle twitched in each cheek. Half-shutting his eyes to keep the smoke from his cigarette out of them, Zhadov sipped the red wine which came from the barrels still standing in the cellar of his childhood home. At the other end of the sofa sat Elizaveta Kievna, also smoking and sipping wine, a gentle smile on her lips. Zhadov had taught her to keep silence from morning to night, while he held forth over half a dozen bottles of old Cabernet. During the war, as well as during the present famished existence in "Château Cabernet" (the half-ruined house amidst a few acres of vineyards which was all the property left to him after his father's death), a wealth of bitter thoughts had accumulated in Zhadov's brain.

Six months before, in the hospital at the rear, on one of his bad nights, when he suffered gnawing pains in the arm which was not there, Zhadov had said to Elizaveta Kievna, in tones fraught with irritation, rage and rancour:

"Instead of keeping me awake all night, staring at me with lovesick eyes, why not call a priest tomorrow, and have done with all this nonsense!"

Elizaveta Kievna had turned pale, and then bowed her head in acquiescence. They were married in the hospital. In December Zhadov was moved to Moscow, where he had another operation, and in the early spring he and Elizaveta Kievna went to Anapa and took up their residence in the "Château Cabernet." Zhadov had absolutely no means of support, and they had to sell old furniture and various household articles to get money for food. But there was wine in plenty—vintage Cabernet, matured during the war years.

Here, in the half-ruined house with the bird-haunted tower, began a period of prolonged and hopeless inactivity. They had long ago said everything they had to say. The future

was a void. A door seemed to have finally closed upon the Zhadovs.

Elizaveta Kievna endeavoured with but small success to fill up by her companionship the emptiness of the intolerably long days. Untidy and inefficient, her efforts to please were merely ridiculous. Zhadov taunted her with her failure, and she reflected despairingly that, for all her breadth of outlook, as a woman she was terribly vulnerable. And yet she would not have exchanged this poverty-stricken life, with its insults, its intolerable boredom, the awed submission to her husband, and the rare moments of ecstasy, for any other.

Of late, with autumn winds whistling along the bleak shore, Zhadov had become more irritable than ever. If she so much as moved, he would bare his cruel-looking teeth, and grind out dreadful words, biting off each syllable. But Elizaveta Kievna would only shudder inwardly, though her skin crept from the affront, as, never taking her eyes off Zhadov's handsome, ravaged countenance, she listened to his ravings for hours on end.

He often sent her for wine to the vaulted brick cellar, which had enormous spiders running all over it. There, squatting in front of a barrel, and watching the crimson stream of Cabernet flow into the earthenware jug, Elizaveta Kievna would let her thoughts run on. In a kind of bitter trance she imagined Arkady killing her one day, here, in the cellar, and burying her beneath a barrel. Many winter nights would pass. He would light a candle and come down here, to the spiders. Sitting in front of a barrel and watching the stream of wine, just as she was now doing, he would suddenly call her name. "Liza!" But there would be no reply—only the spiders running over the walls. And for the first time in his life he would weep for loneliness, for sheer misery. Thus dreaming, Elizaveta Kievna compensated herself for all his insults—in the end it would be she who triumphed, not he.

The wind grew in strength. Its gusts shook the window-panes. A wild voice howled from the tower, a voice that would go on howling all night. Not a single star shone over the sea.

Elizaveta Kievna had been to the cellar three times to fill up the jug. Zhadov sat there motionless and silent. Tonight, no doubt, the talk would be something special.

"Haven't we even got any potatoes?" shouted Zhadov suddenly. "Surely you must have noticed that I've eaten nothing since yesterday!"

Elizaveta Kievna felt stunned. Potatoes...she had been so preoccupied with her thoughts all day, trying to make out what Arkady's attitude towards her really was, that she had quite forgotten about supper. She jumped up from the sofa.

"Stay where you are, slut," said Zhadov in icy tones. "I know quite well there aren't any potatoes. You seem to be fit for nothing on earth but indulging in idiotic fancies."

"I'll go next door—perhaps they'll give us a little bread and potatoes, in exchange for wine."

"You can do that when I've finished talking. Sit down. Today I've finally solved the problem of the permissibility of crime." (When she heard this, Elizaveta Kievna wrapped her shawl round herself and snuggled into the corner of the sofa.) "This problem has haunted me since childhood. The women I met thought I was a criminal, and they gave themselves to me all the more eagerly. But I only arrived at the solution of the problem of crime in the last twenty-four hours."

Reaching for his glass, he gulped down some wine avidly, and lit a cigarette.

"Here I am in the trenches, a few hundred paces from the enemy. What's to prevent me climbing over the breastwork, going into the enemy trench, killing anyone I think fit to kill, there, stealing money, blankets, coffee, and tobacco? If I were quite sure they wouldn't start firing at me, or that, if they did, they wouldn't hit me, then of course I'd go ahead and kill and steal. And they'd put my portrait in the newspapers, as a hero. All, apparently, quite clear and logical. And now that I'm not in the trenches, but in 'Château Cabernet,' a couple of miles from Anapa, what's to prevent me going to the town at night, breaking into Muraveichik's jewellery store, and helping myself to precious stones and gold? If Muraveichik gets in the way I can stick a knife into him, just here, with the utmost ease." He pointed firmly to his own throat. "How is it I haven't done this so far? Again—simply because I'm afraid. Arrest, trial, execution. I'm being perfectly logical, I hope. The problem of murdering and robbing the enemy has been solved by the State, that is to say according to morals laid down by the author-

ities—I mean the legal code—in an affirmative sense. Consequently, the problem narrows down to my personal sense of whom I consider my enemy.”

“But that’s when it’s an enemy of the State, and you are only talking of a personal enemy,” said Elizaveta Kievna almost inaudibly.

“Well done! You’ll be preaching socialism to me next! Rubbish! Morals are based upon the right of the individual, not society. I tell you—mobilization has been a brilliant success in all countries, and the war has been going on full steam ahead for nearly three years despite the protests of the Pope, simply because every one of us, each individual, has outgrown the diaper stage. We want murder and robbery, or if we don’t exactly want them, we have no real objection to them. Murder and robbery are organized by the State. Fools and milksops still go on calling murder, murder, and robbery, robbery. From now on I shall call them the complete fulfilment of the rights of the individual. The tiger takes what he wants. Aren’t I superior to the tiger? Who dares to limit my rights? The legal code? The worms have eaten it.”

Zhadov brought his feet together, rose lightly, and began striding up and down the room, which was almost dark, for the dirty windowpanes barely let in the light from the murky strip of sunset.

“Millions of individuals have become involved in military action, fifty million individuals are fighting on the various fronts. They are organized and armed. For the moment they represent two hostile groups. But there is nothing to prevent them ceasing fire and joining forces one fine day. And this will happen when a man is found to say to that fifty-million group: ‘Blockheads—you’re aiming in the wrong direction!’ The war is bound to end in revolt, in revolution, in world conflagration. The bayonets will be turned inwards—against the rulers of the country. Society itself will become the master of life. A scabby beggar will be placed upon the throne, and all will bow down to him. So be it. It leaves my hands all the freer for the struggle. On the one hand, the law of the masses, on the other, the law of the individual—the individual naked and unrestricted. You stand for socialism, we—for the law of the jungle, the organized, iron discipline of holy anarchy.”

Elizaveta Kievna's heart was beating wildly. Was not this that "abyss" she had dreamed of when she lived in Telegin's flat? But it had become no longer a matter of gay jests, such as the "twelve points of self-provocation" hung on Liza's door by Telegin's boarders.... The man pacing in the twilight backwards and forwards past the window was in very truth terrible, dangerous as a caged puma. He only talked like that because he was not at liberty to act. Listening to his words, Elizaveta Kievna sensed, she almost *saw*, the wild galloping of horses over the steppe, the glow in the sky.... She could almost hear cries, the din of battle, death shrieks, the songs of the steppe.

\* XXV \*

In the early winter of 1916, when depression and disappointed expectations prevailed everywhere, the Russian troops, digging deep tunnels through the snow and clambering over ice-covered slopes, suddenly took the fortress of Erzerum by storm. This occurred at a time when the English were suffering military reverses in Mesopotamia and in the vicinity of Constantinople, when, on the Western front, desperate battles were being waged for a ferryman's hut on the Iser, when the conquest of a few yards of bloodstained earth was reckoned a great achievement, setting the Eiffel Tower buzzing its broadcasts to the whole world.

On the Austrian front, too, the Russian armies, under the command of General Brusilov, suddenly embarked upon a determined offensive.

All this produced an international sensation. A book on the enigmatic Russian soul came out in England. And in fact, contrary to logic and reason, after eighteen months of war and defeat, after the loss of eighteen provinces, after universal despondency, economic and political collapse, Russia had once again taken the offensive over a front of thousands of miles. A wave of fresh and apparently inexhaustible strength was sweeping the country.

Prisoners were moved to the interior of Russia by the hundred thousand. Austria had received her death blow, and was destined, two years later, to fall lightly apart, like a cracked pot. Germany offered a secret peace. The ruble

soared. Once again hopes of putting an end to the war with one effective blow were raised. "The Russian Soul" became excessively popular. Ocean liners were packed with Russian divisions. Peasants from Oryol, Tula, and Ryazan sang soldiers' songs in the streets of Salonika, Marseilles, and Paris, and rushed madly into bayonet attacks for the salvation of European civilization.

The offensive continued all summer. New age categories were constantly being called up. Forty-three-year-old men were taken straight from the plough. Replacement units were being formed in every town. Mobilization reached the figure of twenty-four million. The immemorial terror of swarming Asiatic hordes hung over Germany, indeed, over the whole of Europe.

Moscow was very empty this year—the war had absorbed most of the male population. Nikolai Ivanovich had gone to the front—to Minsk. Dasha and Katya led a quiet, solitary life in town, but they had plenty to do. Brief, melancholy postcards occasionally arrived from Telegin. It appeared he had attempted to escape, but had been caught and removed to a fortress.

For a time the sisters were visited by a charming young man. This was Captain Roshchin, in Moscow for the purpose of receiving munitions and equipment. Nikolai Ivanovich had brought him back to dinner in his car from the Municipal Union one day, and ever since Roshchin had taken to visiting them.

Every evening, towards dusk, there would be a ring at the front-door bell. This was the signal for Katya to rise with a suppressed sigh and go to the sideboard, where she would put out some jam in a glass dish, or cut a lemon into slices. Dasha noticed that when Roshchin followed up the ring by coming into the dining room, Katya did not immediately turn her head towards him, but waited a few seconds before giving her usual gentle smile. Vadim Petrovich Roshchin would bow in silence. He was lean, with dark, mirthless eyes and a well-formed, shaven head. Seating himself at the table, he would tell them the war news in low unhurried tones. Katya, sitting silently beside the samovar, would gaze into his face and her eyes, the pupils dilated, showed how attentively she was listening to him. Meeting her glance, Roshchin would seem to frown ever so slightly, and his spurs would rattle



beneath the table. Sometimes a long silence would ensue, and Katya would suddenly sigh and, blushing, give a confused smile. A little before eleven, Roshchin would rise, kiss their hands—Katya's respectfully, Dasha's absent-mindedly—and take his departure, begging them not to trouble to see him out. His firm steps resounded long in the empty street. Katya would wash and dry the cups and saucers, lock up the sideboard, and, still silent, go to her room and lock herself in.

One day at sunset Dasha was sitting at the open window. Swallows were flying high over the street. Dasha could hear their shrill, brittle twittering, and said to herself that their flying so high meant it would be a warm day tomorrow, and that the swallows, happy birds, did not know there was a war going on.

The sun was sinking, its rays bathing the town in a fine golden dust. People were sitting in the twilight at gates and in porches. The atmosphere was melancholy, and Dasha sat waiting for she knew not what, when suddenly, not far away, a barrel organ added its eternally sentimental note to the pathos of evening. Dasha leaned her elbow on the window sill. A woman's high voice soared up to the roofs of the houses.

"Dry bread was my portion, cold water my drink," it sang.

Katya came up to the back of Dasha's chair, apparently listening, too, for she kept quite still.

"Doesn't she sing nicely, Katya?"

"What's it all for?" cried Katya suddenly, her voice at once low and frantic. "What has all this been sent to us for? What have we done? By the time it's over I shall be an old woman—do you realize that? I can't bear it any longer—I can't!"

Pale lines forming on either side of her mouth, she stood beside the long curtain, breathing heavily, and staring at Dasha with hot, grief-darkened eyes.

"I can't bear it any longer—I can't!" she repeated, in a low, hoarse voice. "It's never going to come to an end! We shall die . . . we shall never be happy any more. . . . Listen to her wailing! She's singing a dirge for the living!"

Dasha embraced her sister, stroked her, tried to console her, but Katya, sticking out her elbows, freed herself.

A ring was heard at the front door. Katya pushed her sister away and looked towards the door. Roshchin entered in a

tunic of coarse cloth, and new, highly polished boots. He smiled a greeting to Dasha, and put out his hand to Katya, his smile changing to a frown of astonishment as he caught sight of her face. Dasha immediately went into the dining room. While she was laying the table for tea, she heard Katya say to Roshchin, in guarded tones, her voice still low and husky:

"Are you leaving?"

Clearing his throat, he replied with a brief: "Yes."

"Tomorrow?"

"No, today—in an hour and a quarter."

"Where are you going?"

"To the forces in the field," he said, adding after a short pause:

"We may never meet again, you know, Ekaterina Dmitrevna, so I've made up my mind to tell you. . . ."

"Don't! Don't I know all about it . . . and you know how it is with me, too. . . ."

"Ekaterina Dmitrevna, you. . . ."

"You can see for yourself!" cried Katya in despairing tones.

"Go away—I implore you!"

The cup in Dasha's hand trembled. There was silence in the drawing room. At last Katya said, very low:

"Go now, Vadim Petrovich!"

"Goodbye!"

He drew a brief sigh. Then his newly polished boots squeaked, and the front door banged. Katya went into the dining room, sat down at the table, and pressed her hands hard against her face.

From that moment she never mentioned the man who had departed. She bore her pain bravely, though she would rise in the morning with reddened eyelids and swollen lips. A postcard came from somewhere on the way, with Roshchin's regards to both the sisters, and lay on the mantelpiece till it became fly-blown.

Every evening the sisters went to Tverskoi Boulevard to listen to the band. They would sit on a bench watching gaily-clad girls in various stages of adolescence, strolling about under the trees. There were great numbers of women and children. More rarely a soldier with a bandaged arm, or a war invalid on crutches, would pass. On one such evening the band was playing a waltz—"On the Hills of Manchuria."

The plaintive notes of the horns rose into the evening sky. Dasha took Katya's weak, thin hand in her own.

"Katyusha," she said, her eyes on the sunset glow showing through the branches of the trees. "Do you remember: 'Love unfulfilled, tenderness cooling in the heart'? I believe, if we are brave, we shall live till we can love without suffering. . . . We know now, don't we, that nothing in the world is greater than love? Sometimes I feel that Ivan Ilyich will come back from captivity quite different, quite new. Now I love him in solitude, spiritually. But we shall meet as if we had loved one another in another life."

Leaning against her shoulder, Katya said:

"Oh, Dasha, my heart's so full of grief and darkness that it has become quite old. You will yet live to see good times, but I shan't—mine is a barren flower."

"You ought to be ashamed to talk like that, Katya!"

"We must learn to face things, child!"

On another of their evenings spent in the boulevard, a man in uniform came and seated himself at the other end of their bench. The band was again playing an old waltz. The street lamps twinkled faintly behind the trees. The man beside them on the bench was looking at them so fixedly that the muscles on Dasha's neck tightened. Turning round, she could not repress a frightened, soft exclamation: "It can't be!"

It was Bessonov, haggard and shabby, in a baggy military tunic, and a cap bearing the badge of the Red Cross. Rising, he greeted them silently. Dasha said: "How d'you do!" and pursed up her lips.

Katya leaned against the back of the seat, in the shadow of Dasha's hat brim, and closed her eyes. Bessonov looked dingy, as if he were covered with dust, or simply unwashed.

"I saw you in the boulevard yesterday and the day before," he said to Dasha, his eyebrows shooting upwards, "but I did not venture to approach you. I'm going away to fight. They've got down to me, you see."

"Why do you say you're going to fight, when you're in the Red Cross?" said Dasha with sudden irritation.

"Of course in comparison, the danger is not so great, I admit that. But as a matter of fact I'm profoundly indifferent as to whether I'm killed or not. . . . Everything's so dull, Darya Dmitrevna."

He raised his head and fixed his lustreless gaze on Dasha's lips.

"It's nothing but corpses, corpses, corpses . . . and it's so dull. . . ."

"Is that what you find so dull?" said Katya, not opening her eyes.

"Yes, deadly dull, Ekaterina Dmitrevna. I still had a gleam of hope left, before. . . . But all these corpses and corpses are the end . . . corpses and blood and chaos. So . . . Darya Dmitrevna, to tell the truth I sat down next to you to ask you to give me half an hour of your time."

"What for?" asked Dasha, looking into his unfamiliar, unhealthy face, and suddenly realizing with dizzying clarity that she had never really seen him before.

"I have thought a great deal about what happened in the Crimea," said Bessonov, frowning. "I should like to have a talk with you." His hand went slowly into the pocket of his tunic in search of his cigarette case. "I should like to obliterate a certain unfortunate impression."

Dasha screwed up her eyes—no, there was not a trace of magic in that repellent countenance. Firmly, she brought out:

"I don't think you and I have anything to talk about," and turned from him with a: "Goodbye, Alexei Alexeyevich!"

His face distorted in a wry smile, Bessonov raised his cap and moved away. Dasha looked at his feeble back, at his baggy trousers which seemed in imminent danger of coming down, at his heavy dusty boots—could this be Bessonov, the demon of her virginal nights?

"Wait a minute, Katya, I'll soon be back," she said hastily, and ran after Bessonov. He had turned into a side path. Dasha, panting, caught him up and took hold of his sleeve. He halted and turned, his eyelids drooping and covering his eyes like those of a sick bird.

"Don't be angry with me, Alexei Alexeyevich!"

"It's not I who am angry, you yourself refused to speak to me."

"No, no, no! You misunderstood me. . . . I like you ever so much, I shall always wish you well. But there's no point in going over the past, there's nothing left of it. . . . I know I was much to blame, I'm ever so sorry for you. . . ."

Raising his shoulders, he glanced ironically past Dasha at the passers-by.

"Thanks for the compassion."

Dasha sighed. If Bessonov had been a little boy she would have taken him home, washed him with warm water, given him sweets. But what was she to do with him as he was—he had created his own sorrow, for his own hurt and torment.

"Alexei Alexeyevich, write to me every day if you like," said Dasha, trying to look as kindly as possible into his face. "I'll answer you."

Flinging back his head he gave a forced laugh.

"Thanks... but paper and ink have become loathsome to me," he said, grimacing as if he had swallowed something sour. "Darya Dmitrevna, you must be either a saint or a fool... Don't you understand that you are the tortures of hell sent to me while I am still alive?"

He made an effort to go, but seemed unable to lift his feet. Dasha stood there, her head hanging—now she understood, and was sorry, but her heart was cold. Bessonov looked at her bent neck, at her tender, virgin bosom, visible at the opening of her white dress, and said to himself: "This is the end, this is death."

"Be merciful," he said aloud in a voice which had become simple, gentle and human.

Without raising her head, she hastened to whisper: "Yes, yes!" and wandered away between the trees. For the last time Bessonov's glance sought her fair head in the crowd. She did not turn once. He placed his hand against the trunk of a tree, the fingertips digging into the green bark. The earth, his last asylum, had given way beneath his feet.

\* XXVI \*

The moon hung, a dim globe, over the deserted peat bogs. Mist curled over the abandoned trenches. Everywhere were the stumps of trees, and here and there low pines loomed dimly. It was damp and still. A line of hospital carts was moving over the narrow log path, in single file. The line of the front lay only about three miles beyond the jagged outline of woods, from which not a sound came.

In one of the carts Bessonov lay supine, covering himself with a reeking horse cloth. Every evening at sunset he had an attack of fever, his teeth chattering with cold, his body seeming to shrivel up, while clear, light, many-coloured thoughts whirled through his brain with a kind of cold effervescence. He felt a delicious sensation of having no bodily weight.

Drawing the horse cloth up to his chin, Alexei Alexeyevich stared into the misty, feverish sky. There it was—the journey's end: mist, moonlight, and the cart rocking like a cradle.

The cycle of a century was once more completed, and the creaking of the Scythian chariot wheels could be heard again. All that had gone before had been mere dreams: the lights of Petersburg, the austere splendour of its buildings, the music in its warm, radiant halls, the thrill of the slowly rising curtain in the theatres, the lure of snowy nights, of a woman's arms flung back over the pillow, of the wild, dark pupils of her eyes.... The excitement of fame... the intoxication of fame.... The half-light in the study, the joyful beating of the heart, and the intoxication of words coming to birth.... The girl with the white daisies, rushing from the lighted hallway into his dark room, into his life.... All, all were dreams.... The cart rocks.... Alongside trudges a peasant, his cap pulled over his eyes. He has been trudging alongside the cart for two thousand years.... There it is, stretched out in the mist and the moonlight, the endless stretch of time.... Shades advance from the darkness of ages, and for sound there is the creaking of the carts, their wheels leaving dark furrows all over the world. And beyond the mists is nothing but broken stovepipes, smoke rising into the sky from charred embers, and the creaking and thunder of carts. And the creaking and thunder of carts grows louder and louder, until the air fairly rings with the blood-curdling din....

The cart came to an abrupt stop. Through the rumbling noise with which the pale night was filled, could be heard the alarmed voices of the drivers. Bessonov raised himself on his elbow. Low over the trees floated a long pillar, with gleaming facets; it turned, gleaming, with roaring motors, and from its entrails issued a blue-white shaft of light, which ran over the swamp, the tree stumps, the felled trees, the fir plantation, and came to rest on the road, on the carts.

Above the din came faint sounds like the rapid strokes of a metronome. Everyone came tumbling out of the carts. The ambulance cart drove into the swamp and was overturned. And about a hundred feet from Bessonov a dazzling bush of light blazed up on the highway. A horse and a cart rose into the air in a black heap, an enormous column of smoke rolled upwards, and the whole train of carts collapsed amidst thunder and whirlwind. Horses galloped over the swamp, dragging behind them the forepart of their carts, men ran hither and thither. The cart in which Bessonov was lying gave a sudden jerk and overturned, and Alexei Alexeyevich rolled down the side of the road into the ditch; he was struck heavily in the back by a falling sack and half-buried in straw.

The Zeppelin dropped a second bomb, then the hum of its motors died down in the distance, and was no longer heard. Bessonov, groaning, began to make his way out of the straw; crawling with difficulty from beneath the baggage with which he was half-covered, he shook himself clear, and climbed back on to the road. A few carts lay on their sides, minus their foreparts; in the swamp, a horse, still in the shafts, lay with its head flung backward, one of its hind legs twitching automatically.

Bessonov felt his head and face—there was a sticky place behind his ear, and he held his handkerchief against the scratch as he walked along the road towards the wood. His legs trembled so violently with the fright and the fall, that after a few steps he had to sit down on a heap of rubble. He longed for a sip of brandy, but his flask was with the baggage in the ditch. With an effort he extracted his pipe and matches from his pocket, and lit up, but the taste of tobacco was bitter and unpleasant. Then he remembered his fever—he was in a plight, at all costs he must get to the wood, where he had been told the battery was stationed. He got up, but his legs gave way completely, they felt like wood, and there was no sensation in them above the knees. He sank to the ground again and began rubbing, extending, and pinching his legs, and, beginning to feel pain, got up and wandered on.

The moon now stood high in the heavens, and the road wound its endless way through the mist over the solitary swamp. His hands in the small of his back, staggering, lifting and dragging his feet in their heavy boots, each of which

seemed to weigh a ton, Bessonov kept up a running conversation with himself:

"On with you, on with you, before the wheels run over you . . . you wrote verses, you seduced foolish women . . . they took you and chucked you out-on with you to the sunset, till you fall. Protest as much as you like. Protest, howl. . . . Go on, scream as loud as you can, howl. . . ."

Suddenly Bessonov turned. A cold shiver ran down his spine at the sight of a grey shade slipping along the road. Then he smiled, and trudged on in the middle of the road, loudly uttering broken, meaningless phrases. In a few moments he cast a cautious glance behind him. There it was! A dog with an enormous head and long legs was following him at a distance of some fifty feet.

"Damnation!" muttered Bessonov, but he hastened his pace and looked over his shoulder again. Now there were five dogs, following him in single file, their muzzles held down—all grey, with drooping hindquarters. Bessonov flung a stone at them. "I'll. . . ! Get away, you filthy beasts!"

The creatures silently slouched downwards to the swamp. Bessonov gathered up some stones, stopping from time to time to throw one. . . . Then he went on, whistling and shouting, "Hi!" The animals clambered back into the road and again followed him in single file.

Bessonov came to a plantation of low firs at the side of the road, and just here, at a turn in the road, he caught sight of a human figure in front. It halted, looked round, and slowly disappeared into the shade of the firs.

"Hell!" whispered Bessonov, and backed into the shade himself, standing there long, waiting for the violent beating of his heart to subside. The animals, too, halted not far away. The foremost of them lay with its muzzle on its paw. The man in front never moved. Bessonov saw, in sharp relief, a long cloud, filmy white, resting against the moon. Then there came a sound which entered his brain with the sharpness of a needle-thrust—the cracking of a twig underfoot—the unknown man probably. Bessonov rapidly moved into the middle of the road and strode on, his fists clenched menacingly. At last, to the right of him, he saw the man, a tall, round-backed soldier with his coat flung over his shoulders. His long, eyebrowless face looked lifeless, grey-skinned, the mouth half-open.



"Hi, you there!" shouted Bessonov. "What's your regiment?"

"I'm from Battery Two."

"Come on, take me there!"

The soldier said nothing, but stood gazing motionless at Bessonov with a lacklustre stare. At last he turned his head to the left.

"What are those things over there?"

"Dogs," called Bessonov impatiently.

"Oh, no they're not—those aren't dogs!"

"Come on—turn round and take me to the battery."

"I'm not going there," said the soldier in a low voice.

"Look here—I have a fever! You take me, I'll pay you."

"I'm not going there," repeated the soldier, raising his voice.

"I'm a deserter."

"They'll catch you anyhow, you fool!"

"Very likely."

Bessonov glanced back over his shoulder. The animals had disappeared, they must have gone into the fir plantation.

"Is it far to the battery?"

The soldier made no reply. But when Bessonov turned to go on, the soldier seized him by the arm just above the elbow, in a firm, pincerlike grasp.

"You're not going there!" he said.

"Let go of my arm!"

"I won't!"

Without letting go of Bessonov's arm, the soldier looked up at the sky, above the fir plantation. "I haven't had anything to eat since the day before yesterday. I was having a nap in the trench just now, and I heard somebody coming. It's the unit, I think to myself. I lay down. They come on, a whole lot of them—marching in step on the road. Now what? I peeps out of the ditch—they're walking in their shrouds—there's no end to them. . . like mist."

"What are you talking about?" shouted Bessonov in a frantic voice, trying to tear himself away.

"It's the truth I'm telling you, you swine!"

Bessonov tore his sleeve out of the man's grasp and ran, though his legs still seemed to be made of cotton wool, and not to belong to him. The soldier, striding after him in his heavy boots and breathing heavily, took hold of his shoulder. Bessonov fell, covering his throat and head with

his hands. The soldier, panting stertorously, threw himself upon Bessonov, digging his hard fingers into his throat, and squeezing it. . . . Then he lay motionless, as if frozen to the spot.

"So that's who you are—that's who you are!" he whispered through clenched teeth. A long tremble shook the body of the man lying on the ground, and then it seemed to stretch and collapse, as if flattened into the dust. The soldier let go of it, rose to his feet, picked up his cap and went on along the road, never turning to look at his handiwork. Staggering, he shook his head, and sat down again, his feet dangling over the ditch.

"Now what, now where?" said the soldier to himself. "My death! Come on, devour me, you beasts. . . ."

## \* XXVII \*

Ivan Ilyich Telegin attempted to escape from the concentration camp, but was caught and transferred to a fortress, in solitary confinement. He immediately began planning a second escape, and worked at filing through one of the bars in front of his window for six weeks. In the middle of the summer the whole fortress was unexpectedly evacuated, and Telegin, as a man under penalty, was sent to the so-called "Rotten Hole." It was a dreadful and depressing place: four long army huts, surrounded by barbed-wire entanglements, stood on a peat field in a great hollow in the ground. In the distance, at the foot of a ridge, where brick chimneys thrust abruptly skywards, began a single-track railway, its rusty line stretching across the swamp, and coming to an end not far from the huts, in the deep hollow—the site of the work of the year before, in the course of which over five thousand Russian soldiers had died from typhus and dysentery. On the other side of the yellow-brown plain rose the uneven zigzag of the purple Carpathian range. North of the huts, far away in the swamp, could be seen a multitude of wooden crosses. On hot days, when steam rose from the plain and the horse flies buzzed, the dull-red sun steadily decomposed this place of despair.

Conditions were severe here, and the food appalling. Half the prisoners were suffering from intestinal disorders,

malaria, ulcers and skin eruptions. Despite this, however, the atmosphere in the camp was optimistic. Brusilov was advancing in spite of fierce resistance, the French had beaten the Germans in Champagne, and at Verdun, the Turks were being pushed out of Asia Minor. The end of the war really did seem to be in sight.

But the summer passed, and the rains began. Brusilov had taken neither Cracow nor Lvov, and the fierce fighting on the French front had died down. The Central Powers and the Entente were licking their wounds. It was quite clear that the end of the war was again being postponed till the autumn.

Then it was that despair settled over the "Rotten Hole." Viskoboinikov, the man who slept in the bed next to Telegin, suddenly left off shaving and washing, and lay for days on his unmade cot, refusing to answer questions. Every now and then he would get up, grimacing, and scratch himself viciously. Reddish sores appeared and disappeared on his skin. One night he waked Ivan Ilyich, to ask in hollow tones:

"Are you married?"

"No."

"I have a wife and daughter in Tver. Mind you go and see them!"

"Stop it, go to sleep!"

"I mean to sleep soundly, brother."

Viskoboinikov did not answer to the morning roll-call. He was found hanging by his thin leather belt to a nail in the privy. There was great agitation in the hut. The prisoners crowded round the body, which had been laid on the floor. The rays from a lantern shone on a face convulsed by intolerable suffering, and revealed the traces of his scratching through the tattered shirt. The lantern shed a dingy light, and the faces of the living bending over the corpse were swollen, yellow, distorted. One of them, Lieutenant Colonel Melshin, turned in the darkness of the hut, and said loudly:

"Are we to take this lying down, Comrades?"

A confused hum rose from the crowd and from the cots. The outer door was burst open, and an Austrian officer, the commandant of the camp, appeared. The prisoners made way for him to approach the dead body, and loud voices were instantly raised:

"We won't take it lying down!"

"Driving a man to death!"

"It's their system!"

"I'm rotting alive myself!"

"We're not convicts!"

"You haven't been beaten badly enough yet, you devils!"

Rising to his toes, the commandant shouted:

"Silence! To your places! Russian swine!"

"What? What was that he said?"

"We're Russian swine, are we?"

Captain Zhukov, a thickset man with a dishevelled bushy beard, immediately forced his way up to the commandant. Poking his thumb right into the Austrian officer's face in an obscene gesture, he shouted in a breaking voice:

"See this, you son-of-a-bitch, you? See this?"

Then, shaking his shaggy head, he gripped the commandant's shoulders, shook him furiously, knocked him down, and fell upon him.

The officers, forming a close circle around the struggling men, kept silence. But the next minute the feet of soldiers running could be heard stamping over boards, and the commandant cried: "Help!" Telegin nudged his comrades, exclaiming: "Are you mad? He'll strangle him!" and seizing Zhukov by the shoulders, dragged him away from the Austrian.

"You're a scoundrel!" he said in German to the commandant.

Zhukov was breathing heavily.

"Let go of me—I'll show him who's a swine!" he said quietly. But the commandant was already on his feet. He straightened his crumpled cap, cast a searching glance over the faces of Zhukov, Telegin, Melshin and two or three others who were standing by, as if to commit their features to memory, and walked out of the hut with loudly jingling spurs. The door was immediately locked, and sentries posted outside.

That morning there was no visit of inspection, no sound of drums, no issue of acorn coffee. Towards noon some soldiers came into the hut with a stretcher and took away the body of Viskoboinikov. Then the door was locked again. The prisoners walked about between the cots, many simply lay down. It became as still as death in the hut. Everybody

realized the situation: mutiny, attack on an officer, court-martial.

Ivan Ilyich began the day as he always did, not deviating from a single one of the rules he had laid down for himself, and had now been obeying for over a year: at six o'clock he had pumped himself a pail of brown water, sluiced and rubbed himself, performed a hundred-and-one gymnastic exercises, taking care that his muscles cracked, dressed and shaved. Now, since there was no coffee that day, he sat down to his German grammar on an empty stomach.

The hardest and most destructive factor of life in captivity was the enforced continence. Many came to grief over this: a man would suddenly begin powdering his face, making up his eyes and brows, and whispering all day long with a friend of like tastes; another would shun his comrades, lie about all day long, with his tattered blanket pulled over his head, unwashed, untended; yet another would start using foul language, pester all and sundry with fantastic stories, and at last commit some obscenity which resulted in his being sent to the infirmary.

From all this there was only one salvation—austerity. During his captivity Telegin had grown taciturn, and his body, the muscles as hard as iron, had dried up; his movements were jerky, and in his eyes appeared a cold, obstinate gleam—in moments of rage or determination they could be terrible.

On this particular day Telegin opened his tattered Spielhagen and began memorizing the German words he had written out the evening before, with even more than his usual thoroughness. Zhukov came and sat on the side of his bunk, but Ivan Ilyich never turned, and continued reading in an undertone. Sighing, Zhukov brought out:

"I shall pretend to be mad at the trial, Ivan Ilyich."

Telegin looked up at him sharply. Zhukov's rosy, good-natured face, with its broad nose, curly beard, and the soft warm lips visible through his unkempt moustache, was drawn and guilty; his fair eyelashes fluttered continually.

"What possessed me to do it? I don't understand now what I meant by it. Ivan Ilyich, I quite realize . . . of course I'm to blame. Acting like a fool and letting down my comrades. So I've decided to say I was mad. . . . D'you think I should?"

"Look here, Zhukov," replied Ivan Ilyich, keeping his place in his book with one finger. "Some of us are bound to be shot . . . you realize that?"

"I do!"

"So perhaps it would be simpler not to play the fool at the trial . . . what d'you think?"

"I suppose you're right."

"None of your comrades blames you. Only the price of the pleasure of socking an Austrian in the jaw is a bit steep, you know."

"Ivan Ilyich! If you knew what I felt—to have let my comrades in for a trial!"

Zhukov shook his shaggy head.

"I wish the beasts would do *me* in, and nobody else!"

He continued talking in this strain for a long time, but Telegin took no further notice of him, and went on reading his Spielhagen. After a time he rose, stretching till his sinews cracked. At that moment the outer door opened violently, and four soldiers entered with fixed bayonets, stationing themselves on either side of the door, and rattling the bolts of their rifles. After them came the sergeant-major, a morose individual with a bandaged eye, who looked round the hut and cried in a fierce, hollow voice:

"Captain Zhukov, Lieutenant Colonel Melshin, Second Lieutenant Ivanov, Second Lieutenant Ubeiko, Sublieutenant Telegin. . . ."

The men named stepped forward, the sergeant-major looking searchingly at each of them. The soldiers surrounded them, and conducted them out of the hut across the yard to a small wooden house, the commandant's office. Here stood a recently arrived military car. The barriers stopping the way through the barbed-wire entanglements to the road had been moved aside. The sentry stood motionless beside the striped sentry box. In the car, lounging on the front seat, was the chauffeur, a mere lad with puffy eyelids. Telegin nudged Melshin, who was walking next to him.

"Can you drive a car?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Sh!"

They were taken into the commandant's office, in which three newly arrived Austrian senior officers were seated at a deal table covered with pink blotting paper. One of them,

with a blue shaven chin and crimson patches on his fat cheeks, was smoking a cigar. Telegin noted that he did not so much as look at them as they entered. His hands lay on the table, the fat hairy fingers locked; his eyes were half-shut to keep the smoke from his cigar out of them, his neck bulged over his collar. "That one's made up his mind in advance," said Telegin to himself.

The presiding judge was a lean old man on whose long, mournful visage were a few scrupulously clean wrinkles, and a fluffy white moustache. One of his eyebrows was lifted by a monocle. He regarded the accused attentively, turning a grey eye, magnified through the glass of the monocle, upon Telegin. The eye was clear, intelligent, and kindly, and the ends of his moustache twitched.

"That looks bad," said Ivan Ilyich to himself, and glanced towards the third judge, before whom lay a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, and a folded sheet of closely-written paper.

He was a stocky man with a pallid earthy complexion, stiff hair cut *en brosse*, and huge prominent ears. Everything about him indicated the old campaigner, and an unsuccessful one.

When the accused were drawn up in front of the table this man slowly put on his spectacles, smoothed out the sheet of paper with a dry palm, and suddenly began reading the indictment, exposing his yellow artificial teeth.

At the side of the table, with twitching eyebrows and compressed lips, sat the plaintiff, the commandant. Telegin strained every nerve to follow the words of the indictment, but do what he would thoughts worked keenly and actively in quite another direction.

"...when the body of the suicide was brought into the hut, several of the Russians, exploiting this incident for the incitement of their comrades to open insubordination to the authorities, began shouting abusive and outrageous expressions, clenching their fists threateningly. In the hands of Lieutenant Colonel Melshin, for instance, was an open penknife...."

Through the window Ivan Ilyich could see the youthful chauffeur, who was picking his nose, settle sideways on the seat and pull the huge peak of his cap over his eyes. Two undersized soldiers with blue cloaks flung over their should-

ers walked up to the car, and stood there, looking at it; one of them squatted to his heels and poked at one of the tires with his finger. Then they both turned—the field kitchen was driving into the yard, its chimney smoking peacefully. It headed for the hutments, and the soldiers rambled lazily towards them. The chauffeur neither raised his head nor turned—he must have fallen asleep. Telegin, biting his lips in nervous impatience, once more turned his attention to the rasping voice of the prosecutor:

"...the above-mentioned Captain Zhukov, deliberately threatening the life of the Herr Commandant, began by thrusting his hand in his face with the fingers clenched, the thumb protruding between the index and middle finger; this obscene gesture was apparently intended as an insult to the imperial uniform. ..."

At these words the commandant rose and, his face breaking out in crimson blotches, began to explain to the court in detail the somewhat obscure history of the Captain's fingers. Zhukov himself, who understood very little German, listened with all his might, and showed signs of desiring to put in a word, glancing at his comrades with a good-natured guilty smile; at last he could restrain himself no longer and addressed the prosecutor in Russian:

"Herr Colonel, allow me to explain—I said to him: 'why do you treat us like this—why?' ... I don't know German, so you see I tried to explain to him with my fingers."

"Shut up, Zhukov!" hissed Ivan Ilyich.

The presiding judge rapped on the table with a pencil. The prosecutor went on reading the indictment.

Describing how, and exactly where, Zhukov had seized the commandant and, "throwing him on his back, had pressed his thumbs into the plaintiff's throat, with the aim of causing his death," the prosecutor proceeded to the most ominous item of the indictment: "...pushing and shouting, the Russians egged the murderer on; one of them, to wit Sublieutenant Johann Telegin, hearing the steps of the soldiers running to the rescue, pushed Zhukov aside, and the Herr Commandant was within a hairbreadth of death." At this point the prosecutor, pausing, smiled complacently. "But at that moment the guard on duty came up and Telegin could only shout: 'scoundrel!' to his victim."



Then came an ingenious psychological analysis of Telegin's behaviour, "who, it is known, has made two previous attempts to escape. . . ." The Colonel brought a point-blank indictment of murderous assault against Telegin and Zhukov, and against Melshin for incitement to murder by brandishing a penknife. In order to enhance the force of the accusation, the Colonel exculpated Ivanov and Ubeiko, as having "acted under the influence of temporary insanity."

When the indictment was read, the commandant confirmed all its statements. The soldiers were questioned: their testimony went to show that the first three accused were undoubtedly guilty, while as to the other two they knew nothing about them. The presiding judge, rubbing his lean hands together, proposed that Ivanov and Ubeiko be acquitted, owing to lack of incriminating evidence. The red-faced officer, who had by now smoked his cigar down to the very end, nodded; the prosecutor, after some hesitation, also agreed. Two of the soldiers in the convoy shouldered arms.

"Goodbye, Comrades," said Telegin.

Ivanov bowed his head, Ubeiko looked at Ivan Ilyich in silent horror.

They were led away, and the presiding judge gave the accused an opportunity to speak for themselves.

"Do you plead guilty to inciting to mutiny and making an attempt on the life of the Commandant of the Camp?" he asked Telegin.

"No."

"Is there anything else you wish to say?"

"The indictment is false from beginning to end."

The commandant leaped up in a fury, demanding an explanation, but the presiding judge checked him with a gesture.

"You have nothing to add to your statement?"

"Nothing whatever."

Telegin moved away from the table and looked steadily at Zhukov. The latter, colouring and snorting, gave to all questions the same replies, word for word, as Telegin had. Melshin did the same. The presiding judge listened to the answers, and closed his eyes wearily. Finally, the judges rose and went into the next room, the red-faced officer, who came last, stopping in the doorway to spit out what remained of his cigar and stretch luxuriously.

"They'll have us shot—I realized that the moment we came in," said Telegin under his breath.

"A glass of water, please," he said, turning to the convoy.

The soldier stepped quickly up to the table and began pouring the muddy-looking water out of the carafe, without putting down his gun. Ivan Ilyich whispered rapidly into Melshin's very ear:

"When they take us out, try to start the engine."

"I follow you."

The judges were back in a minute and took up their former positions. The presiding judge removed his monocle with a slow movement, and holding a piece of paper which trembled slightly before his eyes, read out the brief sentence condemning Telegin, Zhukov and Melshin to be shot.

On hearing these words, Ivan Ilyich, despite his previous conviction as to the sentence, nevertheless felt as if the blood were rushing away from his heart. Zhukov's head drooped. Melshin, strong, broad-shouldered, hook-nosed, passed his tongue slowly over his lips.

The presiding judge wiped his tired-looking eyes, and said, covering them with the palm of his hand, in distinct but low tones:

"The Herr Commandant is instructed to carry out the sentence immediately."

The judges rose. The commandant alone remained sitting bolt upright for a few seconds, his face a sickly green. Then he too rose, straightened his immaculate uniform, and ordered the two remaining soldiers, in a voice exaggeratedly harsh, to lead out the condemned men. Telegin managed to linger in the narrow doorway, and let Melshin go out first. Melshin, as if feeling faint, seized one of the convoys by the sleeve and muttered thickly:

"Come over there a little way, please.... I've got the bellyache, I can't stand it...."

The soldier stared at him in astonishment, pushing him away, and casting a terrified glance over his shoulder, as if at a loss what to do in such an unforeseen contingency. But Melshin managed to drag him in front of the car, where he squatted down, making faces and gasping out complaints, while clutching with trembling fingers now at his trouser buttons, now at the crank. The convoy's face expressed mingled pity and disgust.

"Sit down, then, if you have the bellyache," he said crossly. "Hurry up!"

Melshin suddenly turned the starter with frantic strength. The soldier bent over him, terrified, trying to drag him away. The boy chauffeur started up, shouted something in furious tones, and leaped from the car. All that followed was a matter of a few seconds. Telegin, trying to keep as close as possible to the second convoy, followed Melshin's movements from beneath his brows.

Soon he heard the throbbing of the engine, and his heart began to beat in time with that entrancing jerky throbbing.

"Get his rifle, Zhukov!" he shouted, seizing his convoy round the waist and lifting him bodily before dashing him violently to the ground. A few bounds took him to the car, where Melshin was struggling to get the rifle away from the soldier. Ivan Ilyich dealt the soldier a flying blow in the neck, causing him to sink to the ground with a groan. Melshin threw himself upon the steering wheel and released the gear. Ivan Ilyich had a clear view of Zhukov clambering into the car, burdened with the rifle, and the boy chauffeur stealing along by the wall and suddenly ducking into the doorway of the commandant's office; then a long, distorted, monocled face swam into view at a window, and the figure of the commandant rushed out into the porch, a wildly dancing revolver in his hand. Bang! Bang! "Missed! Missed! Missed!" The wheels seemed to have grown into the turf. But at last the gears squealed, and the car bounded forward. Telegin fell back on the leather cushions. The wind blew more strongly in his face, the striped sentry box, with the sentry levelling his rifle, came nearer and nearer. Bang! The car whizzed past him like a cyclone. Behind it, all over the yard, soldiers were running and dropping on one knee. Bang! Bang! Bang! Faint shots rang out. Turning, Zhukov shook his fist in their direction. Now the gloomy square of huts began to get smaller and smaller, lower and lower, and the whole camp disappeared round a corner. Posts, bushes, figures on milestones, rushed to meet them, and flew dizzily by.

Melshin turned his head—the forehead, one eye, and one cheek were streaming with blood.

"Straight on?" he cried to Telegin.

"Straight on and across the bridge, then to the right, to the hills."

The Carpathian Mountains are lone and sombre on a windy evening in autumn. The hearts of the fugitives were troubled and anxious by the time they reached the crest, by way of the winding road, washed by the rains down to the very stones. A few tall pines swayed over a ravine. Beneath, in the steaming mist, an almost invisible forest emitted a dull hum. Still further down, at the very bottom of the abyss, a rushing torrent roared and splashed over clattering stones.

Behind the trunks of the pines, far beyond the wooded, solitary tops of the mountains, a long streak of sunset glowed among leaden clouds. The wind blew free and strong on these heights, flapping the leather apron of the car.

The fugitives sat in silence. Telegin examined the map, Melshin, his elbow on the steering wheel, stared in the direction of the setting sun. His head was bandaged with a rag.

"What are we to do with the car?" he asked quietly. "There's no more petrol."

"We can't leave it here—God forbid!" said Telegin.

"The only thing to do is to pitch it over the edge," said Melshin. Then he groaned and jumped into the road, stamped up and down to stretch his legs, and began shaking Zhukov by the shoulder.

"Wake up, Captain! We're here!"

Zhukov climbed out of the car without opening his eyes, stumbled, and sat down on a stone. Ivan Ilyich took some leather coats and a basket of provisions, intended for the judges' dinner in the "Rotten Hole", out of the car. They filled their pockets with the provisions, put on the coats and, taking hold of the car by the mud guards, rolled it up to the edge of the precipice.

"You've done your bit, old dear," said Melshin. "Now then, all together!"

The front wheels hung over the precipice. The long, dusty-grey car, with its leather upholstery and bronze fittings, as obedient as if it were alive, subsided, heeled over, and shot downwards, sending up a shower of stones and rubble; it caught for a moment on a projecting ledge, crashed, turned

over, and thundered down the slope, with an ever-increasing noise of flying stones and fragments of metal, till it reached the stream at the bottom. An echo caught up the sound and sent it rolling over the misty canyons.

The fugitives turned into the forest and walked along at the side of the road. They spoke little, and in whispers. It was now quite dark. The pines murmured solemnly overhead, with a sound as of the distant falling of water.

Every now and then Telegin went down to the road to look at a milestone. At one place, where they thought there might be a military post, they made a broad circuit, clambering up and down several gullies, stumbling in the darkness over fallen trees and into mountain streams, getting soaked and tearing their clothes. They walked all night. Once, towards morning, they heard the noise of a car, and lay in a ditch while the car passed so near, that even the sound of voices in it was audible.

In the morning they chose a place to rest on the bank of a stream in a remote wooded gully. Here they sat down to eat, drinking up almost half the brandy in the flask, after which Zhukov asked them to shave off his beard with a rusty razor they had found in the car. When his beard and moustache were removed he was seen to have a surprisingly childish chin, and full, thick lips. Telegin and Melshin kept pointing at him and laughing. Zhukov bellowed with delight, smacking his lips. He was simply drunk. They covered him with leaves and bade him sleep.

Telegin and Melshin spread the map out on the grass, each making himself a small topographical copy from it. They had decided to separate the next day—Melshin and Zhukov to go to Rumania, Telegin to make his way to Galicia. They buried the big map in the earth. Then they made themselves a couch of dry leaves, snuggled into it, and fell instantly asleep.

High up on the rim of the road over the gully stood a man leaning on his rifle. It was the sentry guarding the bridge. All around and beneath him in the wooded waste was stillness, only broken by the ponderous flight of a woodcock rising over the glade, its wings brushing the tops of the young firs, and by the monotonous sound of falling water somewhere in the distance. The sentry stood stock-still for a short time, then moved away, shouldering his rifle.

When Ivan Ilyich opened his eyes it was night; there were bright stars gleaming amidst the black motionless branches. He began going through the events of the day before, but the remembrance of the mental strain during the trial and flight was so painful that he tried to banish all thought of them.

"Ivan Ilyich, are you awake?" asked Melshin softly.

"Yes, I've been awake ages. Get up and wake Zhukov."

An hour later Ivan Ilyich was striding alone along the road, which gleamed white in the darkness.

## \* XXIX \*

On the tenth day Telegin reached the combat zone. He had only been able to proceed by night, sheltering in the woods at the approach of day, or, when forced to descend into the plain, choosing a place for the night as far as possible from the habitations of men. He lived on raw vegetables which he stole from market gardens.

The night was cold and rainy. Ivan Ilyich had to make his way along the highroad amidst ambulance carts, filled with wounded, headed west, farm carts piled with household goods, and crowds of women and old men, bearing in their arms children, bundles and domestic utensils.

From the opposite direction, going east, came military baggage trains and troops. It seemed incredible that 1914 and 1915 had passed, and 1916 was coming to an end, and farm carts were still creaking their way over rough roads, along which the inhabitants of burnt-out villages were tramping in resigned despair. But now the huge military horses were almost too exhausted to move, the soldiers were ragged and shorter of stature, the homeless crowd silent and apathetic. And in the east, from where the icy wind was driving the low clouds, men were still killing men, without being able to exterminate one another.

A vast mass of people and carts moved through the darkness over the swampy plain, and along the bridge across the swollen river. Wheels rumbled, whips cracked, commands rang out, innumerable lanterns bobbed up and down, their rays falling upon the muddied waters swirling round the piles of the bridge.

Gliding along the slope on the side of the road, Ivan Ilyich reached the bridge. A transport was crossing it, and it was hopeless to think of getting to the other side before daylight.

When they came to the bridge, the horses strained at their shafts, digging their hoofs into the damp planks, and drawing their heavy loads with difficulty. At the entry to the bridge was a man on horseback, his cloak fluttering in the wind, holding a lantern and shouting hoarsely. An old man came up to him and took off his cap, evidently making a request. For all reply the horseman struck him in the face with the iron rim of the lantern, and the old man fell down, rolling beneath the wheels of a cart.

The other end of the bridge was lost in darkness, but there was such a maze of dancing lights that it looked as if there were thousands of refugees there. The transport went on and on. Ivan Ilyich stood pressed against a cart, on which was seated, wrapped in a blanket, a thin woman with her hair hanging over her eyes. In one hand she clutched a bird-cage, in the other she held the reins. Suddenly the procession came to a stop. The woman looked round in terror. From the other end of the bridge came a hum of voices, and the lights bobbed up and down more rapidly than ever. Something had happened. A horse screamed wildly, as only animals scream. There was a long-drawn cry, in Polish: "Save yourselves!" And the next moment the air was rent by a volley of firing. Horses shied, carts rattled, the voices of women and children went up in wails and screams.

Intermittent flashes came from the distance, and the sound of counterfiring on the right reached the bridge. Ivan Ilyich climbed on to the hub of a wheel, to see better. His heart was beating like a sledge hammer. Firing seemed to be coming from every direction, all over the river. The woman with the bird-cage got down from the cart; her skirt caught, and she fell, crying "Help!" in a deep voice. The cage with the bird in it rolled down the side of the road.

Amidst cries and clattering the carts started moving over the bridge again—this time at a trot. "Stop! Stop!" cried frenzied voices. Ivan Ilyich saw a large cart heel over at the very edge of the bridge and crash through the railing into the river. He leaped down from the wheel, bounded over scattered bundles, caught up with the train of carts, and flung himself face down on to a moving cart. His nostrils

were immediately assailed by the sweet smell of freshly baked bread. He thrust his hand beneath the tarpaulin, broke a crust from a loaf, and, almost choking in the extremity of his desire, began to eat.

In the midst of confusion and firing, the train at last reached the other end of the bridge. Ivan Ilyich jumped down, made his way amidst the carts full of refugees into the field, and strode along at the side of the road. From snatches of conversation overheard in the dark, he gathered that the firing had been directed at an enemy, that is to say a Russian, mounted patrol. This meant that the front lines were not more than six or seven miles away.

Ivan Ilyich stopped every now and then to take breath. It was hard going, against the wind and rain. His knees ached, his face burned, his eyes were inflamed and swollen. At last he had to sit down on a mound on the side of a ditch and lean his face on his hands. Icy raindrops were running down his neck, his whole frame ached.

The next minute a dull, hollow sound like a distant sigh reached his ears, as if, somewhere far away, the ground were caving in. A moment later the night sighed again. Ivan Ilyich raised his head to listen. Between these two profound sighs he had distinguished a dull muttering, now dying away, now rising to an angry rumble. The sound was not coming from the direction in which Ivan Ilyich was going, but from the left, almost from the opposite side.

He sat down on the other side of the ditch: low-hanging, tattered clouds could now clearly be seen racing across the dingy, leaden sky. This was the dawn. It was the east. Over there lay Russia.

Ivan Ilyich rose, tightened his belt, and stumbled, slipping in the mud, in that direction, across wet stubble, ditches, and the partly filled-in remains of last year's trenches.

When it was quite light, Telegin once more caught sight, across the field, of a highway, covered with people and vehicles. He stood still, looking around him. On one side, beneath a huge, almost leafless tree, was a white-washed shrine. The door had been torn from its hinges, and sodden leaves lay on the circular roof and on the ground.

Ivan Ilyich decided to wait here till dusk fell, and went into the shrine to lie down on the moss-grown floor. The faint, sickly smell of decaying leaves made his head reel.



The rumbling of wheels and cracking of whips could be heard in the distance. These sounds, which were astonishingly soothing, suddenly ceased. Fingers seemed to be pressing his eyelids shut. But something alive gradually invaded his leaden slumber. It seemed to be struggling vainly to become a dream. His fatigue was, however, so overpowering that Ivan Ilyich only moaned and plunged still deeper into sleep. But the living thing would give him no peace, however. His sleep began to wear thin, and once again wheels thundered in the distance. Ivan Ilyich sighed and sat up.

Through the door could be seen dense flat clouds, from beneath the leaden, watery bases of which the westering sun was sending broad shafts of light. A liquid patch of light rested on the crumbling wall of the shrine, illuminating the bowed head of a weather-beaten wooden Madonna with a gilded halo; the child, its print frock rotting away, lay in her lap, and her hand, raised in benediction, was broken off at the wrist.

Ivan Ilyich went out of the shrine. On the stone step at the entrance sat a young woman with a child on her lap. She had on a white jacket, spattered with mud. One hand supported her cheek, the other lay on the gaily coloured quilt around the infant. She raised her head slowly, and looked at Ivan Ilyich. Her glance was bright and strange, her tear-stained features twitched as if in a smile, and she said quietly, in Ruthenian: "He's dead, the little one."

Then she leaned her face on the palm of her hand again. Telegin bent over her and stroked her hair. She gave a spasmodic sigh.

"Come with me. I'll carry him for you," he said gently. The woman shook her head.

"Where am I to go? You go alone, kind Sir."

Ivan Ilyich lingered for another moment, then pulled his cap over his eyes and left her. Just then two Austrian gendarmes came trotting round the shrine. Bewhiskered and blue in the face, they wore dirty, damp cloaks. As they passed, they glanced at Ivan Ilyich and reined in their horses, the one in front shouting hoarsely: "Come here—you!"

Ivan Ilyich went up to them. The gendarme, bending from the saddle, examined him searchingly from brown eyes, the lids reddened by wind and lack of sleep. The eyes suddenly kindled.

"A Russian!" he exclaimed, seizing Telegin by the collar. Ivan Ilyich made no attempt to get away, and only smiled wryly.

They locked Telegin up in a shed. It was already night. The sound of gunfire came clearly to him. Through cracks in the wall he could see a dull red glow. Ivan Ilyich finished up the remains of the bread he had taken from the cart the day before, went round the plank walls looking for a loophole, stumbled over a bale of compressed hay, yawned, and lay down. But soon after midnight the guns began booming away again, quite near, and he could not sleep. Flashes of red came through the chinks. Ivan Ilyich rose and listened attentively. The intervals between firing decreased, the walls of the shed shook, and suddenly, quite close, rifle shots rang out.

It was obvious that the fighting was coming nearer. From the other side of the wall could be heard agitated voices and the throbbing of an automobile engine. There was a great stamping of feet. Only when something heavy struck the outside of the shed did Ivan Ilyich realize that the wall was being spattered by bullets, making a noise like peas on a pan. He lay flat on the ground.

The smell of powder even penetrated the shed. The firing was uninterrupted, it was clear that the Russians were advancing with terrific speed. But the tempest of bloodcurdling noise did not last long. Bursting sounds were heard—hand grenades exploding, like so many nuts being cracked. Ivan Ilyich leaped up, and slunk along close to the walls. Could it be that the attack was being beaten off? Finally there came a hoarse, piercing roar, a whining, the stamping of feet. The shots ceased immediately. In a long moment of silence nothing could be heard but the sound of blows and the clanging of metal. Then voices cried in terror: "Wir ergeben uns, Russ, Russ!..."

Tearing a splinter from the door, Ivan Ilyich could make out, through the chink thus formed, fleeing figures trying to protect their heads with their hands. Horsemen casting enormous shadows were cleaving their way through the crowd, wheeling constantly, as they fell upon the fleeing figures from the right. Three of the fugitives turned towards the shed. One of the horsemen pursued them, the long ends of his Cossack hood floating over his shoulders. His horse, a huge beast, snorted and reared heavily. Its rider was

brandishing his sword like a drunk man, his mouth wide open. And when the horse's forefeet came back to earth, the rider struck at one of the figures with his sword so violently that it whistled through the air, the blade breaking as it entered the victim's flesh.

"Let me out!" cried Telegin frantically, knocking against the door.

The horseman reined in his steed.

"Who's that calling?"

"A prisoner. A Russian officer."

"In a minute!"

The horseman flung away the hilt of his sword, bent down, and forced back the bolt. Ivan Ilyich came out, and the man who had released him, an officer of the Savage Division, said half-mockingly:

"Fancy meeting you!"

Ivan Ilyich looked at him more closely.

"I don't recognize you."

"Why, I'm Sapozhkov—Sergei Sergeyevich Sapozhkov!"

He gave a loud, rasping laugh.

"You didn't expect that, did you? Deuce take it—there's war for you!"

\* XXX \*

For the last hour of the journey to Moscow, the train rolled with prolonged whistlings past abandoned summer cottages; the white smoke from the engine mingled with the tints of autumn leaves, the transparent yellow of birch copses, and purple mushroom-scented ash groves. Here and there the spreading crimson branches of a maple hung over the track. Here and there the shrubberies thinned, affording homely glimpses—a glass ball on a post in the middle of a flower bed, nailed-up shutters, or leaf-strewn paths and steps.

The train passed a halt; from its platforms two soldiers with kitbags on their backs stared indifferently into the carriage windows, and a forlorn young lady in a check coat sat on a bench, tracing patterns with the end of her parasol on the wet boards. At the next bend in the line a wooden hoarding showed through the trees, on it the picture of a bottle and the inscription: "Shustov's incomparable moun-

tain-ash vodka is the best!" Now the woods came to an end, and long rows of whity-green cabbages stretched right and left; at a railway crossing stood a hay cart, with a country-woman in a man's wadded jacket tugging at the small stubborn horse. And in the distance, beneath a long cloud, could already be made out the pointed spires of towers, and the gleaming dome of St. Saviour's soaring over the roofs of the city.

Telegin sat next to the window inhaling the heavy scents of September, rising from decaying leaves, mushrooms, the smoke of straw bonfires, and the earth, just touched by early morning frosts.

Behind him lay the hard path of two years of suffering, ending in this wonderful, long hour of expectancy. According to the reckoning of Ivan Ilyich, exactly at half past two he would be pressing the bell of the only door in the world—he imagined it must be of light oak with a double fanlight at the top—a door that he would have reached dead or alive.

The kitchen gardens came to an end, to be followed in endless procession by rows of mud-spattered suburban cottages, carts rumbling over roughly paved roads, fences around gardens planted with ancient lime trees, their branches stretching across side streets, brightly coloured sign-posts, and passers-by, all intent on their trivial affairs, oblivious of the clattering train and Ivan Ilyich at the window. Far below, a toylike tram threaded its way through a cavernous street; the dome of a tiny church showed from behind a house; and the wheels of the train rattled over the points. At last, at last, after two endless years the boards of a Moscow railway platform glided past the windows! Clean, aloof-looking old men in white aprons clambered into the carriages. Ivan Ilyich thrust his head far out of the window, looking all round. Silly, of course, for he had not told anyone he was coming.

Stepping out of the station, Ivan Ilyich could not help laughing: in the square, some fifty paces away, was a long line of droshkies. Waving their mittened hands from the box seats, the drivers were all shouting: "I'll take you, Sir!"

"Come on, Sir, try the black courser!"

"My droshky's a fast one, rubber-tired!"

The tightly-reined horses stamped, snorted and whinnied. The square resounded with shouts and cries. It seemed as

if the droshkies were preparing to storm the station in a body.

Ivan Ilyich climbed into a high vehicle with a narrow seat; the handsome, cheeky driver asked him with kindly condescension where he wanted to go; he started off at a round trot to impress his passenger, sitting sideways and holding the reins slackly in his left hand, as the rubber tires bounded over the paving stones.

"From the front, Your Honour?"

"Escaped from captivity."

"Did you, now? Well, how are things over there? They say they have nothing to eat. Look out, Granny! So you're a national hero! There've been lots of escapes. Look where you're going, carter! Blockhead! Ever heard of Ivan Trifonovich?"

"Who's he?"

"He lives in Razgulyai Street—deals in cloth. Hired me yesterday, he was almost in tears. *There's* a story for you! Makes a pile on contracts, doesn't know what to do with his money, and the day before yesterday his wife goes and runs away with a Pole! We izvozchiks spread the story all over town. And now Ivan Trifonovich is ashamed to go out of the house. That's what he gets for robbing the people!"

"Do go faster, old chap," urged Ivan Ilyich, although the tall courser, which had the bad habit of continually tossing its vicious-looking head, was flying through the street like the wind.

"Here we are, Your Honour, the second door. Whoa, Vasya!"

Ivan Ilyich cast a swift, agitated glance up at the six windows of the white house, at each of which clean lace curtains hung demurely, and jumped off at the entrance. The door was an old one, heavily carved, with a lion's head on it, and there was a bellpull, not an electric button. Ivan Ilyich stood still for a few moments, his heart beating slowly and painfully, before he could muster up the courage to raise his hand to this bellpull. "After all, who knows—perhaps there's nobody at home, perhaps they won't see me," he said to himself as he tugged slowly at the brass handle. From far within came the jangle of the bell. "There's nobody at home of course!" But the next moment a woman's rapid footsteps could be heard. Ivan Ilyich looked round in sudden

embarrassment. The driver winked at him jovially. Then a chain clanked, the door opened a crack, revealing the pock-marked face of a housemaid.

"Does Darya Dmitrevna Bulavina live here?" asked Telegin, clearing his throat.

"She's in. Come in, please," answered the pock-marked damsel in a kindly, singsong voice. "The mistress and the young lady are both in."

As if in a dream, Ivan Ilyich passed through a narrow passage with glass panes let into one of the walls, great dress baskets standing here and there, and a pervading smell of furs. The maid opened another door, on the right, upholstered in black oilcloth, and he found himself in a tiny dark hall with women's coats hanging from pegs, and—on a shelf in front of a long mirror—gloves, a kerchief with a red cross on it, and a down shawl. A familiar, scarcely perceptible, exquisite scent rose from all these innocent objects.

Without asking the visitor's name, the maid went to announce his arrival. Ivan Ilyich touched the down shawl with his fingertips and suddenly felt as if there could be no connection between this pure, exquisite life, and himself, only just escaped from all that bloody mess.

"Somebody for you, Miss," he could hear the maid's voice from somewhere right inside.

Ivan Ilyich closed his eyes as if awaiting some celestial thunderclap, and trembled from head to foot when he heard a clear voice say rapidly:

"For me? Who is it?"

There was a sound of footsteps in the intervening rooms. They were flying out of the abyss of two years of waiting. Dasha stood in the doorway of the tiny hall, the light from the windows falling on her, and bringing out a golden glint in her fair hair. She seemed taller and more slender in her knitted jacket and navy-blue skirt.

"Have you come to see me?"

Dasha faltered. Her features twitched, the brows flying upwards, and the lips falling apart, but the fleeting shade of alarm disappeared instantly from her face and her eyes lit up with joy and astonishment.

"Is it you?" she murmured, almost inaudibly, and she threw her arms violently round the neck of Ivan Ilyich, kissing him with tender, quivering lips. Then she stood back.

"Come with me, Ivan Ilyich!"

And Dasha ran into the drawing room, sat down in an armchair and, bending over her knees, covered her face with her hands.

"I know I'm being silly," she whispered, wiping her eyes hard.

Ivan Ilyich stood in front of her. Suddenly Dasha, seizing the arms of the chair, raised her head:

"Ivan Ilyich, did you escape?"

"Yes."

"Good heavens! And then?"

"And then . . . I came straight here."

He sat down in an armchair opposite her, squeezing his cap firmly against his chest.

"How did it happen?" faltered Dasha.

"There was nothing out-of-the-way about it."

"Was it dangerous?"

"Yes . . . that is—not specially."

They went on talking thus for a short time longer. Gradually they both became trammelled by their shyness.

"Have you been here—in Moscow—long?" asked Dasha, lowering her eyes.

"I came here straight from the station."

"I'll order coffee at once."

"Please don't trouble. . . I'll go to a hotel."

"Will you come again this evening?" asked Dasha, almost inaudibly.

Ivan Ilyich bowed, with compressed lips. He could hardly breathe.

"Well, I'm off," he said, getting up. "I'll come back in the evening." Dasha extended her hand to him. He took her soft, firm hand, and the contact seemed to burn him up, and send the blood flying into his face. He squeezed her fingers and went into the passage, but looked back from the door. Her back to the light, Dasha was looking after him from beneath bent brows.

"May I come about seven, Darya Dmitrevna?"

She nodded. Ivan Ilyich bounded into the porch, calling to the waiting driver:

"Drive to a hotel, a good one, the best there is!"

Flinging himself into the droshky once more, his hands thrust into his coat sleeves, he smiled broadly. Bluish, non-

descript shadows—people, trees, vehicles—flew past him. The chill wind, laden with the characteristic odours of a Russian town, cooled his cheeks. Ivan Ilyich lifted his hand, still burning from Dasha's touch, to his nostrils, and said, laughing aloud: "Pure magic!"

And Dasha, after seeing Ivan Ilyich off, stood at a window in the drawing room. Her head was ringing, and she simply could not pull herself together so as to realize what had happened. She closed her eyes tightly for a moment, and then, with a sudden gasp, ran into her sister's bedroom.

Katya was sitting at the window, sewing and thinking. Hearing Dasha's steps she asked, without lifting her head:

"Who was it, Dasha?"

Then she looked at her sister, her features twitching.

"It's him. Don't you understand? Him! Ivan Ilyich!"

Katya dropped her sewing and brought the palms of her hands slowly together.

"And fancy, Katya—I'm not even glad! I'm only frightened," said Dasha hollowly.

### \* XXXI \*

When dusk began to set in, Dasha started trembling at the slightest rustle, and was continually rushing into the drawing room and listening. Several times she opened a book, and always at the same page:

"Marusya loved the chocolate her husband brought her from Kraft's. . . ."

Two windows suddenly shone out in the frosty twilight, in the house opposite, where the actress Charodeyeva lived, and a maid in a cap could be seen laying the table. Then there appeared Charodeyeva herself, thin as a skeleton, a velvet coat flung over her shoulders. She sat down at the table, yawning—she must have been dozing on a sofa—poured herself out a plate of soup, and suddenly fell into abstraction, gazing glassy-eyed at a vase of fading roses. "Marusya loved the chocolate," Dasha repeated through clenched teeth.

Suddenly there was a ring. The blood rushed from Dasha's heart. But it was only the evening paper. "He's not coming," she told herself, and went into the dining room, where a single electric bulb shone over the white tablecloth, and the



clock ticked away the seconds. It was five minutes to seven. Dasha sat down at the table. "And so life passes, minute by minute."

There was another ring at the front door. Almost choking, Dasha leaped up and ran into the hall.... It was the watchman from the hospital, with a bundle of papers. Of course Ivan Ilyich wouldn't come, and no wonder—after waiting two years, she had not found a word to say to him.

Dasha took out her handkerchief and began biting a corner of it. Hadn't she felt it, hadn't she known, that it would be just like this? She had loved an imaginary man for two years, and when the real man came she had lost her head.

"Awful, awful!" said Dasha to herself.

She did not notice that the door had opened and the pockmarked Liza was in the room. "Someone to see you, Miss."

Heaving a deep sigh, Dasha tripped lightly into the dining room, her feet scarcely seeming to touch the ground. Katya saw her first, and smiled at her. Ivan Ilyich leaped to his feet, blinked, and drew himself erect.

He had on a new cloth tunic, with a new cartridge belt slung over one shoulder; he was freshly shaven, and had had a haircut. His great height, erect bearing, and broad shoulders, were more striking than ever. He was quite another man—that was obvious. The glance of his light eyes was steady, and there were two folds, two thin lines at the corners of his straight, clean-cut lips. Dasha's heart beat, she understood that they were the traces left by death, horror and suffering. His handclasp was firm and cool.

Dasha drew back a chair and sat down beside Telegin. Laying his clenched hands on the table, and casting perpetual swift glances towards Dasha, he told them the story of his captivity and escape. Dasha, sitting very close to him, gazed into his eyes, her lips parted. Ivan Ilyich's voice sounded unfamiliar and distant in his own ears, and his whole being was profoundly shaken. There beside him, her dress brushing against his knee, was that creature whom no words could describe—that utterly incomprehensible girl, fragrant with a warm, dizzying aroma.

Ivan Ilyich related his experiences the whole evening. Dasha kept breaking in with questions, interrupting him, clapping her hands and appealing to her sister.

"Just fancy, Katya—he was sentenced to be shot!"

When Telegin described the fight for the car, the moment that had lain between himself and death, the way the car had leaped forward and the wind had beaten in his face, with life and liberty ahead, Dasha turned deadly pale and seized his hand.

"We'll never let you go any more!"

Telegin laughed.

"They'll call me up again, it can't be helped. My only hope is that they'll send me to some war plant."

He pressed her hand warily. Dasha looked into his eyes, and looked again, more intently; then a slight flush came on her cheeks and she released her hand.

"Why aren't you smoking? I'll bring you some matches."

She went out swiftly and was back again instantly with a box of matches. Standing in front of Ivan Ilyich, she began striking matches, holding them by the very end, and when they broke, exclaiming: "Look at the matches our Liza buys!" At last one struck. Dasha brought it carefully to Ivan Ilyich's cigarette, the flame lighting up her chin. Telegin closed his eyes as he drew in the first puff. He had not known that lighting a cigarette could give such pleasure.

Katya watched Dasha and Telegin in silence. She was happy, truly happy for Dasha, and yet she felt very sad, too. She could not get out of her head Vadim Petrovich Roshchin, whom she had hoped in vain soon to forget; he had sat there at the table with them, and once she, too, had brought him the matches and struck a light, without breaking a single one.

Telegin left at midnight. Dasha, embracing her sister and kissing her warmly, locked herself into her room. On her bed, her hands above her head, she told herself that she had at last extricated herself from the slough of despond, and that, though all around was as yet wild and desolate, there was now a break in the clouds, and this was in itself a joy.

\* XXXII \*

Five days after his return, Ivan Ilyich got an official letter notifying him to present himself at the Baltic Works.

It was all like a dream: the delight which this letter gave him, the remainder of the day spent with Dasha rushing

about town, the hurried parting at the Nikolai Station, and then the second-class compartment, with its dry heat and the sharp reports from the heating apparatus, the packet he was surprised to find in his pocket, tied up with ribbon, and containing two apples, a bar of chocolate, and some cakes. Ivan Ilyich unbuttoned the collar of his cloth tunic, stretched out his legs, and, unable to wipe the idiotic smile from his lips, glanced at his fellow traveller opposite—a severe-looking old man in glasses.

"Excuse me—are you leaving Moscow?" asked the old man.

"Yes!" Oh, the divine word—Moscow. The streets bathed in autumn sunshine, the dry leaves underfoot, Dasha, stepping over them, so light and slim, her clear intelligent voice (he could not remember a single word of what she had said), the warm smell of flowers which he inhaled every time he bent over her or kissed her hand.

"Moscow is a Sodom, a veritable Sodom," said the old man. "I've been there three days. . . . Had a look at things. . . ." He parted his feet in their high boots and galoshes, and spat. "Wherever you go, there are people running backwards and forwards. At night it's all lights, bustle, vertigo, everywhere crowds. . . . No sense in anything! Yes, that's Moscow for you! That's where our whole country began! And as far as I can see it's all nothing but an infernal, meaningless bustle. You've been to the war, young man, you've been wounded, eh? I can see that at a glance. . . . Tell me, tell an old fellow—is our blood being shed over there for the sake of this accursed hurly-burly? What about our country? Our religion? Our tsar? You tell me that! I'm going to Petersburg, to look for yarn. Yarn be damned! What d'you suppose I'll take back to Tyumen—yarn? Not I! I'll go back and tell them: we've all gone to the dogs—that's what I'll take back with me. Mark my words, young man! We shall pay—we shall pay for it all. . . . We shall have to answer for all this senseless to-do."

Placing his hands on his knees, the old man rose stiffly and pulled the blind over the window, past which, in the darkness, was flying a flaming string of sparks from the engine. "We have forgotten God, and God has forgotten us. And I tell you—there'll be a reckoning to pay, oh, there'll be a heavy reckoning. . . ."

"What d'you mean? D'you think the Germans are going to beat us?" asked Ivan Ilyich.

"Who can say? Whoever the Lord sends to chastise us, from him shall we receive our punishment. . . . Supposing, now, the lads in my shop start misbehaving. I put up with it for a time, and then—one will get a blow on the back of his head, another in his neck, and yet another will get the sack. And Russia's not my shop—it's a huge concern, God knows. The Lord is merciful, but when men have let the path to Him be overgrown it's got to be cleaned up, hasn't it? That's what I mean. God has turned away from the world. And that's the worst thing that could happen."

The old man folded his hands over his stomach and closed his eyes, his glasses shining austere as he bobbed up and down in the corner of the dingy bunk. Ivan Ilyich went out of the compartment and stood at the window in the corridor, his face almost touching the glass.

Fresh, keen air filtered in through a chink in the window. Fiery streaks flew, interlacing, past the window, and dropped to the ground. A cloud of grey smoke was borne past now and then. The train wheels rumbled complacently. A prolonged whistle came from the engine as it took a bend, and a flame from the firebox brought the pointed black tops of the firs into momentary relief. The train rocked gently over the clicking points, the green disc of a signal flashed by, and the long streaks again flew past the window in a fiery rain.

As he watched them, Ivan Ilyich realized to the full, with a sudden, overwhelming rush of joy, all that had happened to him in the last five days. Had he been able to tell anyone all that he felt, he would have been considered mad. But for him there was nothing either strange or mad about it; everything was extraordinarily clear.

What he felt was something like this: millions and millions of people were living, suffering and dying in the darkness of the night. But their life was a mere symbol, and all that was going on in the world was merely symbolic, scarcely more than illusory. So illusory, that Ivan Ilyich felt that a slight effort on his side might change everything. But amidst all this illusion there was a living core—himself, Ivan Ilyich, a figure pressed against the window of a train . . . one who was loved. This being had emerged from the world of shades, and was flying over the dark world in a fiery rain.

This extraordinary sensation of love for himself lasted a few seconds. He went back to the compartment, scrambled on to the top berth, looked at his big hands as he undressed, and, for the first time in his life, found them beautiful. Then, clasping them behind his head, he closed his eyes, and instantly saw Dasha. She was looking into his eyes, moved and loving, as she had looked that same day, in the dining room, where she was wrapping up some pies. Ivan Ilyich had walked round the table, gone up to her, and kissed her warm shoulder, and, on her turning quickly, had said: "Dasha, will you be my wife?" She had only looked at him.

Now, lying on the top berth, recalling Dasha's face as if he could never be tired of the image, Ivan Ilyich felt, also for the first time in his life, a joyous exultation in the thought that Dasha loved him, the man with large, but beautiful hands.

On arriving in Petersburg Ivan Ilyich went immediately to the Baltic Works, and registered in one of the workshops, on the night shift.

Many changes had occurred at the works during the last three years; there were three times as many workers there—some young, some transferred from factories in the Urals and from western towns, some straight from the front. The workers read the papers, heaped curses upon the war, the tsar, the tsarina, Rasputin, the generals; everyone was indignant, everyone was convinced that after the war, revolution would burst out. What enraged everyone was that chaff was being mixed with the flour in the municipal bakeries, and that there was often no meat for days at a time in the markets, and when there was it was putrid; that the potatoes were spoiled by frost, sugar was dirty, and that the price of all foodstuffs was nevertheless going up, while shopkeepers, profiteers and speculators, battenning on war contracts, were paying at that time as much as fifty rubles for a box of chocolates, and a hundred for a bottle of champagne, and would not hear of peace with Germany.

Ivan Ilyich received three days' leave for the arranging of his personal affairs, and spent them looking all over the town for rooms. He inspected scores of houses, not one of which satisfied him. But on the very last day he unexpectedly

found a flat which answered to his dreams in the train: five small rooms with sparkling windows facing the sunset. This flat, which was in a house at the end of Kameno-Ostrov Street, was a bit expensive for Ivan Ilyich, but he took it without a moment's hesitation, and wrote to Dasha about it.

The next night he went to the works. The yard, black with coal dust, was lit up by lamps on high posts. The smoke from the factory chimneys, owing to damp and wind, hugged the ground, and the air was filled with stifling yellow fumes. Through the huge dusty semicircular windows of the various shops, myriads of pulleys and driving belts could be seen, the cast-iron beds of lathes moving backward and forward, drilling, planing, turning iron and bronze, while the vertical discs of punching machines revolved constantly. The cabs of cranes ran high up into the air, and flew by in the dark. The furnaces blazed pink and white. The earth trembled from the blows of a gigantic steam hammer. Pillars of flame shot into the darkness of the grey sky from low chimneys. Amidst this clamorous din, amidst the roaring of the machines, moved the figures of human beings.

Ivan Ilyich went into the shop, where the presses turning out shrapnel bodies were working. One of the engineers, an old acquaintance of his, named Strukov, led him through the shop, explaining certain features of the work which were new to Telegin. Then he went with him to a sort of office in a corner, boarded off from the shop, where he showed him the books and registers, and handed the keys over to him, saying, as he put on his coat:

"Twenty-three per cent of output is spoilage—try not to exceed that figure."

In his words, and the manner in which he handed over the shop, Ivan Ilyich sensed indifference to the work. This saddened him, for Strukov, when he had known him, had been an excellent engineer, quite an enthusiast.

"Do you consider it impossible to reduce the percentage of spoils?" he asked.

Strukov, yawning, shook his head, pulled his cap well down over his unkempt hair, and moved back to the lathes with Ivan Ilyich.

"Why should you worry, old man? What's the difference? It only means we kill twenty-three per cent fewer Germans

at the front! It can't be helped, anyhow—the lathes are worn out, and to hell with them!"

He stopped in front of a press. An old worker with short legs, wearing a leather apron, was placing a red-hot mould beneath the press; the frame sank, the rod of the press entered the glowing steel as if it were butter, a flame burst out, the frame rose, and a shrapnel body fell on to the earthen floor. The old man immediately put a new mould in its place. Another worker, young, tall, black-moustached, was busy at the furnace. Strukov spoke to the old man:

"Aren't there rather a lot of spoils among the shrapnel bodies, Rublev?"

The old man laughed, jerked his sparse beard to one side, and squinted at Telegin slyly through his slits of eyes.

"Well yes, there are. Look how it works!" He placed his hand on the post, green with oil, up and down which the press had to slip.

"It shakes too much. The damned thing ought to have been scrapped long ago."

The young worker at the furnace, Ivan Rublev's son Vasili, laughed.

"A whole lot of things ought to be scrapped," he said. "All the machinery has got rusty."

"Easy there, Vasili," said Strukov cheerfully.

"Easy there and easy here," said Vasili, shaking his curly head, and a confident, by no means good-humoured grin flitted across his lean face with the rather high cheekbones, small black moustache, and fierce, steady eyes.

"The best workers in the shop," said Strukov quietly to Ivan Ilyich, as he turned away. "Goodbye. I'm going to the 'Red Sleigh Bells' tonight—ever been there? Nice place, and they serve wine."

Telegin began to study the Rublevs—father and son—with some curiosity. From the first, he had been struck by Strukov's manner of speaking to them—it almost amounted to a code, consisting of words, laughs and glances—and it seemed to him that all three of them had been trying to discover whether he was friend or foe. The ease with which the Rublevs entered into conversation with him during the next few days showed him that they considered him a friend.

The term no doubt applied not so much to the political views of Ivan Ilyich, which were vague and undetermined,

as to that feeling of confidence which he inspired in everyone. Without his doing or saying anything in particular, it was perfectly obvious that here was an honest man, a kind man, decent all through, "one of us."

Whenever his work on the night shift brought him to the neighbourhood of the Rublevs, Ivan Ilyich would stand and listen to the father and son arguing with each other.

Vasili Rublev was well-read, and all his talk was of the class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat, on which themes he expressed himself in glib, high-flown language. Ivan Rublev was an Old Believer, a cunning old fellow, and not a bit pious.

"Where I come from," he would say, "in the forests of Perm, in the hermitages, everything is written down in the holy books: this here war, and the devastations it will lead to—how our whole country will be ruined, and the number of people who will be left in it . . . not very many, there won't. . . . And how a man will come out of the forests, out of a hermitage, and rule the land, and rule it by the terrible word of God."

"That's mysticism," said Vasili.

"Blackguard! Boor! Priming himself with words! Calls himself a socialist! A Cossack, and calls himself a socialist! I used to be the same myself. If he had his way he'd rush about with his cap on one ear, seeing everything topsy-turvy, and yelling: 'Come to the struggle!' Who's the struggle against? What's it for? You blockhead!"

"Listen to the old chap," Vasili would say, jerking his thumb in the direction of his father. "He's a dangerous anarchist, doesn't know a thing about socialism, but is always ready to yelp at me for the sake of argument."

"No," interrupted Ivan Rublev, snatching a spitting ingot out of the furnace. "No, gentlemen!" And describing a half-circle in the air with the mould, he laid it adroitly beneath the descending rod of the press. "You read books, but you don't read the right ones. And nobody has any humility—they never think about that. They don't understand that in our times everyone ought to be poor in spirit."

"You're all mixed up, Father. Didn't you go about calling yourself a revolutionary a short time ago?"

"Yes, I did. And if anything were to happen, I'd be the first to snatch up a pitchfork. Why should I hang on to the



tsar? I'm a muzhik. Nobody knows how many acres of land I've ploughed in the last thirty years! Of course I'm a revolutionary—what d'you suppose? Don't I care about my soul's salvation?"

Telegin wrote to Dasha daily, but her replies were less frequent. Her letters were strange, with an icy undercurrent, and, reading them, Ivan Ilyich felt a slight chill. He usually sat at the window and read a page of Dasha's letter, in the large sloping hand, over and over again. Then he would gaze at the grey and purple woods on the isles, at the cloudy sky, murky as the water in the canal, and tell himself that it was quite right for Dasha's letters not to be affectionate, as he had thoughtlessly expected they would be.

"My dear friend," she wrote. "You say you have taken a flat with five rooms. Think what an expense you are letting yourself in for! Even if you won't be living alone it's a lot—five rooms! And the servants you'll need—two maids at least! That's too much for these days! It's autumn in Moscow, now, cold and rainy—not a ray of light. . . . We must wait for the spring."

Just as, on the day of Ivan Ilyich's departure, Dasha had only replied with a look when he asked her to be his wife, in her letters she never referred directly to their marriage, or their future life together. They would have to wait for the spring. . . .

This waiting for the spring, this vague, despairing hope for a miracle of some sort, was common to all, now. Life had come to a standstill, it was a time of hibernation, of living on one's own fat. In waking hours it seemed as if no one had the strength to survive the expectation of another springtime of bloodshed.

Once Dasha wrote:

"...I had meant neither to speak nor write to you about Bessonov's death. But yesterday I heard fresh details of his terrible end. I met him in the Tverskoi Boulevard a short time before he went to the front. He was awfully pathetic, and now it seems to me that if I had not repulsed him then, he might not have died. But I did repulse him. I could not do otherwise, and I would do just the same again, if the past could be revived."

Telegin spent half the day on his answer to this letter. . . . "How could you think that I could fail to accept anything which concerns you? . . ." He wrote slowly, thinking hard, so as not to admit of a single false word. "Sometimes I put myself to the test, and try to imagine that you were to love someone else—the most terrible thing that could happen to me . . . even *that* I would accept. It isn't that I would reconcile myself to it—oh, no! The sun would go dark for me. But is my love for you nothing but joy? I know what it means to long to give one's life because one loves too deeply. That must have been what Bessonov felt when he went to the front. . . . And you, Dasha, must feel that you are absolutely free. . . . I ask nothing of you, not even love. . . . lately I've realized this. . . ."

Ivan Ilyich, returning from the works two days later at daybreak, had a bath and went to bed, only to be aroused in a short time by a telegram.

"Everything all right love you awfully your Dasha."

One Sunday Strukov called for Ivan Ilyich and took him to the "Red Sleigh Bells."

The cabaret was in a basement, the vaulted ceilings of which were adorned with paintings of birds with bright plumage, depraved-looking infants, and extremely significant flourishes. It was noisy and smoky. On the stage sat a little bald man with rouged cheeks, picking out tunes on a piano. Some officers were drinking strong punch and passing loud remarks on every woman who entered. A few barristers, devotees of art, were shouting and arguing. The queen of the basement, a dark-haired beauty with puffy eyelids, was laughing loudly. Antoshka Arnoldov, twisting at a lock of his hair, sat writing his copy from the front. Seated at a table set on a small platform, his head drooping drunkenly, the progenitor of futurism, a veterinary surgeon with a distorted, consumptive-looking visage, drowsed against the wall. Every now and then the proprietor of the basement, an ex-actor, long-haired, mild, drink-sodden, appeared at a side door, stared wildly at his clients and disappeared again.

Strukov, a little tipsy from the punch, said to Ivan Ilyich:

"Know why I like this place? Because you won't find such putridity anywhere else! It's delightful! Look at that woman over there in the corner—skinny, hideous, she can hardly move: the last stages of hysteria—and immensely popular!"

Strukov laughed, sipped his punch, and, without wiping

his flabby lips, the upper one shaded by a Tatar moustache, went on naming people at the tables to Ivan Ilyich, pointing to one sleep-starved, diseased, half-mad face after another:

"They're the last of the Mohicans, all of them. . . the remnants of the aesthetic salons. . . . Phew! What a mouldy lot! They've shut themselves up here, and are pretending there isn't any war, and that all is as it used to be."

Telegin listened and looked around him. The heat, smoke, and wine made everything dreamlike, and his head was swimming. . . . He noticed that several people were turning their heads towards the entrance; the veterinary surgeon opened a pair of jaundiced eyes with an obvious effort; the proprietor's crazy countenance appeared round the partition; the comatose woman seated sideways next to Ivan Ilyich raised slumbrous eyelids, and sat up with unexpected vivacity, staring in the direction in which all were staring. . . . A sudden stillness fell upon the basement, broken by the tinkle of a falling glass. . . .

In the doorway stood an elderly man of middle height, with one shoulder thrust forward, his hands in the pockets of his cloth jacket. As he stood there smiling, his narrow face with the flowing black beard settled into two deep characteristic wrinkles, the whole dominated by a pair of steady, shrewd, piercing eyes. The silence lasted a whole minute. Then another face approached his from the darkness of the doorway, that of an official-looking individual, who whispered something in his ear smiling nervously. The elderly man wrinkled up his big nose in displeasure.

"There you go again with your nonsense! I'm sick of you!"

He glanced round the basement still more cheerfully, jerked up his beard and said in a loud, drawling voice:

"Well, goodbye, you jolly fellows!"

The next moment he was gone. The door banged. The basement hummed with conversation. Strukov dug his nails into the arm of Ivan Ilyich.

"Did you see him?" he panted. "It was Rasputin."

### \* XXXIII \*

Ivan Ilyich was returning from the works on foot at four a. m. one frosty December night. He had not been able to find a droshky—even in town it was difficult to get one nowa-

days at such an hour. Telegin walked rapidly down the middle of the deserted street, his breath turning to steam within his raised collar.

In the light of the infrequent lamps the air was filled with falling needles of ice. The snow crunched loudly underfoot. Reddish reflections danced on the flat yellow front of the house ahead. Turning the corner, Telegin caught sight of flames from a fire in a perforated pail, around which hovered freezing, muffled figures, enveloped in clouds of steam. Further on about a hundred persons—women, old men, and lads—stood motionless in line on the pavement. This was a queue outside a food shop. Next to it a night watchman stamped in his felt boots, clapping his mittened hands.

Ivan Ilyich skirted the queue, glancing at the figures huddling in shawls and blankets against the wall.

"Three shops were looted on the Vyborg Side yesterday," said a voice.

"That's all there is left to do, now!"

"I asked for a pint of oil yesterday—the shopman told me there wouldn't be any more oil, and in comes Dementyev's cook and buys over a gallon, at the black-market price."

"How much?"

"Two and a half rubles a pint, my girl."

"Two and a half rubles for oil?"

"That shopkeeper had better look out—we'll remember him when the time comes!"

"My sister says a shopkeeper in the Okhta district was caught at those tricks and they put him head first into a barrel of brine. The poor chap was drowned, and he did so beg them to let him off!"

"They didn't do enough to him—these fellows ought to be tortured."

"Meanwhile we are to freeze."

"While he swills tea."

"Who swills tea?" asked a husky voice.

"They all do. My mistress—she's a general's wife—gets up at twelve, and gulps down cup after cup till midnight. I wonder she doesn't burst, the pig!"

"And you can freeze and go off into a consumption."

"You're quite right, I've got a cough already."

"My mistress is nothing but a loose woman. When I get back from the market the dining room's always full of visitors

—all drunk. The moment they come they ask for fried eggs, black bread, vodka—the roughest food.”

“It’s English money they’re spending on drink,” someone put in confidently.

“What are you talking about?”

“Everything has been sold—you can believe me, I know what I’m talking about. You stand here and know nothing, and you’ve all been sold, for fifty years ahead. The Army’s been sold, too.”

“For God’s sake!”

A husky voice again asked:

“Mr. Watchman! Mr. Watchman—I say!”

“What’s the matter?”

“Will there be salt today?”

“In all likelihood there will be no salt today.”

“The rascals!”

“No salt for five days!”

“Drinking the people’s blood, the swine!”

“That’ll do, girls—you’ll get sore throats, shouting like that,” said the night watchman in a guttural bass.

Telegin left the queue behind. The angry buzz of voices died away, and once more the straight streets were deserted, disappearing into the icy mist. Ivan Ilyich reached the embankment, and turned on to the bridge, only realizing when the wind fluttered the skirts of his coat that he ought to be looking for a droshky, and forgetting it the next moment. Far away on the other side of the river, almost invisible street lamps twinkled intermittently. A row of dim lights marked the slanting track made by pedestrians on the ice. An icy wind raked the wide dark expanse of the Neva, resounding against the snow underfoot and whistling plaintively among the tramway cables and through the interstices of the iron railings of the bridge.

Every now and then Ivan Ilyich would stand still and gaze into the sombre darkness, and go on again, thinking, as he was always thinking now, of nothing but Dasha and himself, and of that moment in the railway compartment when he had been enveloped in happiness as by a flame.

Now all was vague, confused, conflicting—alien to that happiness. It required a fresh effort every time to assert: “I am alive, I am happy, my life will be bright and beautiful!” It had been easy enough to say this, standing at the window

of the railway carriage with the sparks flying past, but now he had to make a vast effort to detach himself from those half-frozen figures in the queues, from the howling, mortal despair of the December wind, from the sense of universal loss and impending ruin.

Of one thing Ivan Ilyich was convinced: in his love for Dasha, in Dasha's charm, and in the joyful sensation within him when he had stood at the window of the train, and later, when he had felt himself loved by Dasha, was to be found the highest good.

The cosy old social edifice, a little cramped perhaps, but for all that so delightful, was trembling and cracking beneath the blows of war, its pillars shaking, its dome split right across, its ancient stones crumbling, and here were two beings amidst the rubble and thunder of the tottering temple—Ivan Ilyich and Dasha, who, in the crazy optimism of love, dared, despite all, to hope for happiness. Was it right?

Peering through the sombre darkness of the night at the twinkling lights, and listening to the heart-rending despair underlying the whistling of the wind, Ivan Ilyich said to himself: "Why not admit that the desire for happiness is strongest of all? I want it despite everything. Very well! Can I abolish queues, feed the hungry, stop the war? I can't! And this being the case, does it mean that I, too, ought to disappear into the gloom, to renounce happiness? Surely not! But can I, shall I, be happy?"

Ivan Ilyich had crossed the bridge and was striding along the embankment, quite oblivious now of the way he was going. Tall electric lamps, swaying in the wind, shone brightly. The powdery snow rustled dryly over the bare pavement. The windows of the Winter Palace were dark and deserted. In front of a striped sentry box, half-buried in snowdrifts, stood a gigantic soldier in a sheepskin coat, his rifle clenched against his chest.

Ivan Ilyich suddenly came to halt, glanced at the windows, and then strode on still faster, now battling against the wind, now propelled along by it from behind. He felt capable, just then, of proclaiming a simple clear truth to the whole world, and making everyone believe it. "Don't you see," he would have cried, "that you can't go on living like this any more? States are built up on hate, frontiers are determined by hate, every one of you is a bundle of hate, a fortress with

guns pointing in all directions. Life is cramped and terrible. The whole world is choking with hate, human beings are exterminating one another, rivers of blood are flowing. Haven't you had enough? Haven't your eyes been opened yet? Are you waiting till man shall have destroyed his fellow man here too, in every house? Come to your senses! Lay down your arms, erase your frontiers, set open the doors and windows of the house of life. . . . There are boundless lands for the raising of corn, meadows for grazing flocks, mountain slopes for vineyards. . . . The treasures within the earth are inexhaustible—there is room for all. . . . Can't you see you are still living in the murk of bygone ages?"

There were no droshkies in that part of the town either. Ivan Ilyich crossed the Neva once more and plunged into the network of crooked streets on the Petersburg Side. Meditating, talking to himself, he at last lost his way, and wandered about at random through the dusky, deserted streets, till he came out on the embankment of one of the canals. "What a walk!" he exclaimed with a laugh, as he stopped to take breath and look at his watch. It was precisely five. A big open motorcar, showing no headlights, dashed round the corner, the snow crunching beneath its tires. At the wheel was an officer in an unbuttoned overcoat; his narrow, clean-shaven face was pale, and his eyes glassy, like those of an extremely drunk man. Behind him sat another officer, his cap pushed well back, his face hidden by a long bundle wrapped in matting, which he was holding in his arms. The third person in the car was a civilian, in a tall sealskin cap, with the collar of his coat turned up. He suddenly rose and gripped the shoulder of the man at the wheel. The car drew up not far from the little bridge. Ivan Ilyich watched all three of them jump out, drag the bundle from the car, trail it a few paces over the snow, and then, with an effort, lift it and carry it to the middle of the bridge, balance it a moment on the parapet, and cast it into the water. The officers immediately returned to the car, the civilian remained behind for a while, bending over the railing and looking down, and then, turning his collar down, ran after his comrades at a rapid trot. The car started off at full speed and disappeared.

"Faugh, how beastly!" muttered Ivan Ilyich, who had all this time been standing with bated breath. He went up to

of the railway carriage with the sparks flying past, but now he had to make a vast effort to detach himself from those half-frozen figures in the queues, from the howling, mortal despair of the December wind, from the sense of universal loss and impending ruin.

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Peering through the sombre darkness of the night at the twinkling lights, and listening to the heart-rending despair underlying the whistling of the wind, Ivan Ilyich said to himself: "Why not admit that the desire for happiness is strongest of all? I want it despite everything. Very well! Can I abolish queues, feed the hungry, stop the war? I can't! And this being the case, does it mean that I, too, ought to disappear into the gloom, to renounce happiness? Surely not! But can I, shall I, be happy?"

Ivan Ilyich had crossed the bridge and was striding along the embankment, quite oblivious now of the way he was going. Tall electric lamps, swaying in the wind, shone brightly. The powdery snow rustled dryly over the bare pavement. The windows of the Winter Palace were dark and deserted. In front of a striped sentry box, half-buried in snowdrifts, stood a gigantic soldier in a sheepskin coat, his rifle clenched against his chest.

Ivan Ilyich suddenly came to halt, glanced at the windows, and then strode on still faster, now battling against the wind, now propelled along by it from behind. He felt capable, just then, of proclaiming a simple clear truth to the whole world, and making everyone believe it. "Don't you see," he would have cried, "that you can't go on living like this any more? States are built up on hate, frontiers are determined by hate, every one of you is a bundle of hate, a fortress with



guns pointing in all directions. Life is cramped and terrible. The whole world is choking with hate, human beings are exterminating one another, rivers of blood are flowing. Haven't you had enough? Haven't your eyes been opened yet? Are you waiting till man shall have destroyed his fellow man here too, in every house? Come to your senses! Lay down your arms, erase your frontiers, set open the doors and windows of the house of life. . . . There are boundless lands for the raising of corn, meadows for grazing flocks, mountain slopes for vineyards. . . . The treasures within the earth are inexhaustible—there is room for all. . . . Can't you see you are still living in the murk of bygone ages?"

There were no droshkies in that part of the town either. Ivan Ilyich crossed the Neva once more and plunged into the network of crooked streets on the Petersburg Side. Meditating, talking to himself, he at last lost his way, and wandered about at random through the dusky, deserted streets, till he came out on the embankment of one of the canals. "What a walk!" he exclaimed with a laugh, as he stopped to take breath and look at his watch. It was precisely five. A big open motorcar, showing no headlights, dashed round the corner, the snow crunching beneath its tires. At the wheel was an officer in an unbuttoned overcoat; his narrow, clean-shaven face was pale, and his eyes glassy, like those of an extremely drunk man. Behind him sat another officer, his cap pushed well back, his face hidden by a long bundle wrapped in matting, which he was holding in his arms. The third person in the car was a civilian, in a tall sealskin cap, with the collar of his coat turned up. He suddenly rose and gripped the shoulder of the man at the wheel. The car drew up not far from the little bridge. Ivan Ilyich watched all three of them jump out, drag the bundle from the car, trail it a few paces over the snow, and then, with an effort, lift it and carry it to the middle of the bridge, balance it a moment on the parapet, and cast it into the water. The officers immediately returned to the car, the civilian remained behind for a while, bending over the railing and looking down, and then, turning his collar down, ran after his comrades at a rapid trot. The car started off at full speed and disappeared.

"Faugh, how beastly!" muttered Ivan Ilyich, who had all this time been standing with bated breath. He went up to

the parapet, but peer as he might he could see nothing in the great black hole in the ice beneath. And there was no sound but the gurgling of warm, foul-smelling water from a drain pipe.

"Faugh, how beastly!" he muttered again and walked scowling along the pavement beside the canal. At the corner he at last found a sleigh, with a freezing old man on the box seat, driving a loose-mouthed hack, and when, getting in and fastening the apron, which was frozen stiff, he shut his eyes, his whole frame seemed to be humming with fatigue. "I love, and that is where truth lies," he said to himself, "whatever I do will be right, so long as the motive is love."

#### \* XXXIV \*

The bundle tied up in matting which had been thrown by three men from the bridge into a part of the river not frozen over, was the body of the murdered Rasputin. To kill this peasant, with his almost superhuman vitality and strength, they had had to put cyanide of potassium in his wine, then to shoot him in the chest, the back, and the head, and finally, to smash his skull with a knuckle-duster. And even then, when his body was found and dragged out of the river, medical testimony established that Rasputin only ceased breathing under the ice. This murder seemed to constitute a turning point for the developments which began two months later. Rasputin himself had said more than once that when he died the throne would collapse and the Romanov dynasty perish. There must have been vague presentiments of evil in this savage and violent man, such as dogs are said to have before a death in the house, and he had died hard—the last supporter of the throne, the peasant, the horse thief, the fanatical monster.

His death caused profound despondency in the palace, but the country at large rejoiced, and in their comings and goings people congratulated one another. Nikolai Ivanovich wrote to Katya from Minsk: "The night the news was received, the officers of the Commander-in-Chief's staff ordered eight dozen bottles of champagne for the mess. All along the front the soldiers are shouting for joy."

A few days later, this murder was forgotten in Russia but not in the Court: there they believed in Rasputin's prophecy, and made ready, with the gloomiest forebodings, for revolution. Petrograd was secretly divided up into sectors, machine guns were demanded from Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich, and when he refused them, they were sent from Arkhangelsk, four hundred and twenty being secreted in attics and placed at crossroads. Press restrictions were tightened, and the newspapers began coming out with whole columns left blank. The tsarina sent desperate letters to her husband, endeavouring to rouse his will and make him display firmness of spirit. But the tsar remained at Mogilev, as if bewitched, protected, he was convinced, by ten million faithful bayonets. Women rioters, and the howls coming from the Petrograd bread queues, alarmed him less than the armies of the three empires advancing upon the Russian front. And all the time, unknown to the tsar, General Alexeyev, Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command, was making plans for the arrest of the tsarina, and the destruction of the German party at Court.

In January, in anticipation of a spring campaign, the order was given for an offensive on the Northern front. The fighting began near Riga, one freezing night. With the opening of artillery fire a snowstorm began. The troops advanced in the deep snow, amidst the howling of the blizzard and the flaming hurricane of bursting shells. Dozens of aeroplanes which had gone up to support the attack were beaten down by the wind, many raking Russian as well as enemy troops with machine-gun fire in the darkness of the snowstorm.

Russia was making one last attempt to break through the iron ring hemming her round; Russian peasants, shrouded in white, hurled forward by a polar storm, were making their last fight for an empire covering one sixth of the earth's surface, for an autocracy once capable of building up a great state constituting a world menace, but now a survival which had long outlasted its time, a historical absurdity, a moral sickness of the whole nation.

The battle raged for ten days, and thousands laid down their lives in the snowdrifts. The offensive was halted, and petered out. Once more the front lay congealed in snow.

Ivan Ilyich had counted on going to Moscow for Christmas but was sent to Sweden instead, and only got back in February; arranging for three weeks' leave, he wired to Dasha that he would be leaving on the twenty-sixth.

He had to take duty in the workshops for a whole week before he could get away. He could not help being struck by the change which had taken place during his absence. The management had become unusually courteous and solicitous, while the men were so short-tempered that it seemed as if at any moment somebody might dash a wrench to the ground and shout out: "Down tools—out into the streets!"

Just now the workers were in a fever of excitement over the proceedings in the Duma, where debates on the food question were in progress. These proceedings clearly showed that the government, with difficulty maintaining presence of mind and dignity, were trying desperately to beat off attacks, and that the tsar's ministers, no longer discoursing like the heroes of legend, had come down to human speech, while their speeches, and those uttered in the Duma, were all lies, for the real truth was on the lips of all: dark, ominous rumours of imminent, universal ruin, at the front and in the rear, from famine and devastation.

During his last night on duty Ivan Ilyich noticed extraordinary excitement among the workers. They were continually leaving their lathes and conferring, and it was obvious that they were awaiting news of some sort. When he asked Vasili Rublev what it was all about, Vasili suddenly threw his padded coat over his shoulders with a vicious movement, and went out of the shop, banging the door behind him.

"Vasili's become confoundedly bad-tempered, the rascal," said Ivan Rublev, "he's dug up a revolver somewhere, and keeps it on him."

But Vasili soon reappeared, and the workers in the depths of the shop, abandoning all the lathes, crowded round him. "Statement of Lieutenant-General Khabalov, commander of the troops in the Petersburg military district," said Vasili loudly and emphatically, reading from a white sheet of paper in his hands. "During the last few days the issue of flour to bakeries, and the quantity of bread baked, has been as usual—"

"That's a lie!" exclaimed several voices instantly. "No bread has been issued for three days!"

"—There should be no shortage of bread—"

"He ought to know—it was his decree!"

"If there have been shortages in certain shops, this is owing to the fact that many persons, fearing a deficiency, have been buying it up to make rusks."

"Who's been doing that?" howled a voice. "Hope he chokes on one of his own rusks!"

"Quiet, Comrades!" shouted Vasili. "It's time for us to go out into the streets, Comrades. Four thousand workers from the Obukhov Works are marching down Nevsky Prospekt. . . . And they're coming out on the Vyborg Side, too."

"Right! Let them show us the bread!"

"They won't show you bread, Comrades. There's only flour for three days in the town, and there's no more bread or flour to come. All the trains are held up in Siberia . . . and the elevators there are bursting with grain. . . . There are seventy thousand tons of meat rotting in Chelyabinsk . . . they're greasing wheels with butter in Siberia. . . ."

The workshop was in an uproar. Vasili raised his hand.

"Comrades! Nobody's going to give us any bread till we take it ourselves . . . let us go out with the other factories, Comrades, into the streets, with the slogan: 'All Power to the Soviets!'. . ."

"Down tools! Stop work! Put out the furnaces!" shouted the workers, rushing about the shop.

Vasili Rublev came up to Ivan Ilyich. His small moustache was trembling.

"You go away," he said in distinct tones. "Go away before you get hurt!"

For the remainder of that night Ivan Ilyich slept badly, and awakened from anxiety. The morning was cloudy: outside, drops were dripping from the iron cornice. . . . Ivan Ilyich lay trying to collect his thoughts. He was still restless, and the drops were maddening, they seemed to be falling right into his brain. "I mustn't wait till the twenty-sixth, I must leave tomorrow," he said to himself, and pulling off his shirt, went into the bathroom, turned on the shower, and stood under the icy, cutting spray.

There was a lot to be done before leaving. Ivan Ilyich drank his coffee hurriedly, went out, and jumped on a crowd-

ed tram: here he sensed the same excitement again. The passengers sat in their usual gloomy silence, their feet tucked nervously under the seats, pulling away the edges of their coats from beneath their neighbours; the floor was greasy, drops were trickling down the windows, the bell next to the driver's seat jangled maddeningly. Opposite Ivan Ilyich sat a military official with a yellow, dropsical face; his clean-shaven lips were set in a wry smile, but his eyes darted about inquiringly, with an animation which was evidently not characteristic. Taking another look, Ivan Ilyich noticed that all the passengers were regarding one another in the same way—in astonished inquiry.

At the corner of Bolshoi Prospekt the tram stopped. The passengers started fidgeting and looking about them, and a few persons jumped off the step. The driver removed the wrench, thrust it into the front of his blue coat, and, opening the door in front a crack, said, his voice angry and nervous:

"The tram is not going any further."

There were trams as far as the eye could see on Kamenno-Ostrov Street and Bolshoi Prospekt. The pavements were seething with shifting crowds. Every now and then an iron shutter came thundering down over a shop window. A thin, damp snow was falling.

On the roof of a tram appeared a man in a long, unbuttoned coat, who snatched off his cap and shouted something. A long sighing o-o-oh passed over the crowd. The man, after fixing a rope to the top of the car, straightened himself, and snatched off his cap again. Another o-o-oh passed over the crowd. The man leaped to the pavement. The crowd surged back, exposing to view a dense group, slipping over the dingy, yellowish snow, as they tugged at a rope tied to the car. The tram began to heel over. The crowd moved back, little boys whistled. But the car only swayed precariously and righted itself, its wheels knocking against the rails. Then the group tugging at the rope was joined by people running up from all directions, who also started pulling, in silent absorption. The car leaned over again and suddenly crashed, with a tinkling of breaking glass. The crowd, silent as ever, moved towards the overturned tram.

"Now the fat's in the fire!" said a voice just behind Ivan Ilyich—it came from the official with the sallow face whom

he had noticed in the tram, and the next instant several voices dragged out in discordant unison:

*You have fallen victims in the fatal struggle....*

On his way to Nevsky Prospekt, Ivan Ilyich observed the same perplexed glances and anxious countenances. Eager listeners, like small whirlpools, surrounded the bearers of news. Well-nourished porters stood in the doorways, a housemaid thrust her head out of a window and looked up and down the street. A gentleman with a glossy beard, his fur-lined coat unfastened, carrying a brief case in his hand, asked a yardman:

"What's that crowd, my dear fellow? What's going on over there?"

"They're asking for bread, they're rioting, Sir."

"I see!"

Further on, a pale lady stood at a crossing holding in her arms an apoplectic dog with drooping, quivering hindquarters; she asked every passer-by: "What's that crowd? What do they want?"

"It looks like revolution, Ma'am," said the gentleman in the fur-lined coat, now quite cheerful.

A worker with an unhealthy, twitching face was striding along the pavement, the hem of his wadded jacket flapping smartly. Turning suddenly, he cried out in a piteous, cracked voice:

"Comrades! How much longer will they grind the faces of the workers?"

A chubby-cheeked, boyish officer made the driver of the cab in which he was seated stop his horse, and, holding on to the izvozchik's belt, stared at the excited groups in the street as if he were watching an eclipse.

"That's right, have a good look!" the worker growled at him.

The crowd, which was getting bigger, and now filled the whole street, hummed with excited talk, and moved towards the bridge. White flags appeared in three places. The passers-by were sucked into the stream, and floated like chips in the gathering current. Ivan Ilyich crossed the bridge with the crowd. Some cavalry officers were galloping across the snowy expanse of the Field of Mars, which was pitted with the imprints of horses' hoofs and shrouded in mist. When they saw the crowd they turned their horses and approached

at a footpace. One of them, a ruddy-faced colonel with his beard parted in the middle, laughed and saluted. Mournful, heavy singing came from the crowd. From the mists of the Summer Park ragged-plumed ravens, like those which had frightened the murderers of the Emperor Pavel, rose from the dark, bare branches.

Ivan Ilyich walked on in the front ranks of the crowd. He felt a constriction in his throat. He tried to get rid of it by coughing, but excitement kept mounting up in him. When he got as far as the Engineers' Palace he turned to the left, and continued along Liteini Prospekt.

Another crowd was pouring into Liteini Prospekt from the Vyborg Side, and surging over the bridge. Along its entire length, curious onlookers clustered in the gateways, and excited faces appeared at windows.

Ivan Ilyich stopped in front of a gate beside an old official with quivering jowls. Far away to the right, a line of soldiers stretched across the street, leaning motionless on their rifles.

As the crowd approached them its pace slackened. From its midst came terrified cries of: "Stop! Stop!" the next minute the word: "Bread! Bread! Bread!" came from thousands of shrill women's voices. . . .

"Outrageous!" barked the official, glancing severely at Ivan Ilyich from over the top of his glasses. Just at that moment two sturdy yardmen came through the gate and began shoving the onlookers back. The official's cheeks shook, a young lady in pince-nez cried: "Don't you dare, you lout!" But the gate was closed. All along the street, doors and gates were being closed.

There were terrified cries of: "No! No!"

The howling crowd moved on. A youth in a broad-brimmed hat, his face flushed with excitement, sprang out in front.

"Forward the banners!" came voices.

At that moment a tall, slim-waisted officer, his furred Cossack cap smartly cocked, appeared in front of the line of soldiers. His hand on the holster at his hip, he shouted something, and the words: "The order to fire has been given. . . I have no desire for bloodshed. . . Disperse!" could be made out.

"Bread! Bread! Bread!" howled the voices savagely.

And the crowd moved upon the soldiers. . . . Wild-eyed



men and women began pushing past Ivan Ilyich. . . . "Bread! . . . Down with them. . . . Swine!"

Someone in the crowd fell down, and, thrusting upwards a distorted countenance, kept shouting like one possessed: "I hate them! . . . I hate them! . . ."

Suddenly there was a sound all along the street like the tearing of calico. All became quiet in an instant. A school-boy, ramming on his cap, dived into the crowd. . . . The official raised a gnarled hand in the sign of the cross. The volley had been fired into the air, and was not followed by a second one, but the crowd retreated, part of it dispersing, part following the flag into Znamensky Square. Nothing was left on the yellowish snow but caps and odd galoshes. Coming out into Nevsky Prospekt, Ivan Ilyich again heard the hum of innumerable voices. This was another crowd advancing, having crossed the Neva at Vasilyevsky Island. The pavements were full of well-dressed women, military men, students, and foreign-looking strangers. An English officer with a pink, childish face stood rigid as a post. Shop girls with black bows in their hair, pressed their powdered faces against the glass panes of shop doors. And in the middle of the street, reaching into its misty expanse, marched the angry crowd of workers, men and women, howling: "Bread! Bread! Bread!"

A driver who had drawn up his sleigh alongside the pavement, was leaning sideways in his seat, cheerfully talking over his shoulder to a lady, crimson with fear, in the back seat.

"You can see for yourself I can't go on—they wouldn't let a fly pass."

"Go on, fool—don't dare answer me back!"

"I'm nobody's fool any more. . . . You get out of the sleigh. . . .!"

Passers-by on the pavement jostled one another, thrust out their necks, listened, and asked anxiously:

"Is it true that a hundred people have been killed in Liteini Prospekt?"

"Nothing of the sort! It was only a pregnant woman and one old man!"

"Heavens! Why did they kill an old man?"

"Protopopov's orders. And he's mad, poor chap!"

"News, good people! It's incredible! A general strike!"

"What? Water and electricity too?"

"If only it were true at last!"

"Well done, the workers!"

"Don't be in such a hurry to rejoice! They'll be crushed...."

"Take care you don't get crushed yourself, with that expression on your face!"

Ivan Ilyich, annoyed at so much loss of time, called at several addresses where he had business to transact, but finding no one at home at any of them, started walking up the Nevsky Prospekt, thoroughly irritated.

Once more sleighs began dashing over the road, yardmen came out to scrape the snow from the pavement, and the important individual in a long black coat reappeared at the street corner, flourishing his white truncheon, the magic wand of law and order, over the hot heads and wild thoughts of the multitude. A malicious passer-by, hurrying across the road, might have said to himself, looking at the policeman: "You wait, old boy—your turn will come!" But no one dreamed that the turn had already come, and that the statuesque, moustached figure with the truncheon was already a mere ghost, destined in a day or two to disappear from the street corners, from daily life, from the minds of men....

"Telegin! Telegin—stop! Are you deaf?"

Strukov ran up to Ivan Ilyich, his cap pushed back, his eyes sparkling with mischief.

"Where are you off to? Let's go to a café!"

He seized Telegin's arm and dragged him to a café.

The smell of cigar smoke with which the room was filled made the eyes smart. Men in bowler hats, in sealskin caps, their coats unbuttoned, were arguing, and shouting, every now and then leaping to their feet. Strukov pushed his way to a window, and sat down opposite Ivan Ilyich at a small table.

"The ruble is falling!" he exclaimed, gripping the edge of the table with both hands. "Securities are going to the devil! That's what I call power! Tell me what you saw...."

"I was in Liteini Prospekt, there was firing, but I think it was in the air."

"What d'you say to all this?"

"I don't know. It seems to me the government will have to tackle the question of transporting food supplies in real earnest, now."

"Too late!" shouted Strukov, banging on the glass top of the table. "Too late! We have devoured our own vitals. An

end to the war—we've had enough. D'you know what they're clamouring for in the factories? For the calling of Soviets of Workers' Deputies—that's what they want! And they won't believe in anything but these Soviets."

"You don't say so!"

"This is the very end, old boy. The autocracy has gone bust. Open your eyes! This is no mere riot ... it's not even revolution ... it's the beginning of chaos. It's chaos itself."

A vein stood out beneath the drops of sweat on Strukov's forehead.

"In three days' time there will be neither State, nor army, governors nor police any more.... A hundred and eighty million wild men! Do you realize what a wild man is? Tigers and rhinoceroses are mere child's play in comparison. A cell in a disintegrating organism—that's what a wild man is. It's terrifying! It's bacteria devouring one another in a drop of water."

"Oh, to hell with you," said Telegin. "It's nothing of the sort, and it's not going to be. Supposing it is revolution! And a good thing too!"

"Oh, no! What you saw today wasn't revolution. It was just the disintegration of matter. The revolution is yet to come—it will come. But you and I will not see it."

"You may be right," said Ivan Ilyich, getting up. "Vasili Rublev—he's the revolution. Not you, Strukov. You make too much noise, and you rationalize too much."

Ivan Ilyich returned to his rooms early and went to bed immediately. But oblivion only visited him for a moment, and he sighed, turned heavily on his other side, and opened his eyes. There was a smell of leather from an open suitcase standing on a chair. In this suitcase, bought in Stockholm, was a beautiful travelling case of leather and silver, a present for Dasha. Ivan Ilyich was very sentimental about it, taking it out of the tissue paper every day, to feast his eyes on it. He pictured to himself a railway compartment with the long window that foreign railway compartments have, and Dasha in travelling dress on the seat; on her lap this gewgaw, smelling of scent and leather, a symbol of carefree, delightful wanderings.

Through the window Ivan Ilyich could see the sombre sky suffused with the dingy purplish reflection of the city's lights. And he understood perfectly the anguished hatred with which those who had today howled for bread must now be regarding this reflection. The unloved, monotonous, detested city. The will and brain of the country. And now infected with a mortal disease. . . . Now in its death agony. . . .

It was about twelve o'clock when Ivan Ilyich left the house. . . . The wide, misty street was deserted. In a crystal vase behind the steaming windows of a flower shop was a gorgeous bunch of red roses, with large drops of water on their petals. Ivan Ilyich looked lovingly at them through the falling snow.

A Cossack patrol—five horsemen—emerged from a side street. The last of them turned his horse's head and trotted up to the pavement, towards three men in caps engaged in low-voiced animated conversation as they walked. These men came to a standstill, and one of them, with a cheerful remark, took the horse by the bridle. The act was so extraordinary that Ivan Ilyich's heart jumped. But the Cossack only laughed, throwing back his head, and then, giving the prancing horse its head, overtook his comrades, all five disappearing into the mist of the street.

As he approached the embankment Ivan Ilyich began meeting groups of excited citizens. It was obvious that no one could settle down after the occurrences of the previous day. People were moving towards the river, conferring, and exchanging news and rumours.

All along the stone parapet, thousands of the curious made a patch like a black antheap as they moved over the snow. Right at the bridge stood a group of hotheads, shouting at the soldiers blocking the way, who were drawn up across the bridge and down its whole length to the other end, almost invisible in the mist of falling snow.

"What are you blocking the bridge for? Let us pass!"

"We want to get into town!"

"It's outrageous to impede citizens. . . ."

"The bridge is for walking on, not for you!"

"You're Russians, aren't you? Let us pass!"

A tall N.C.O. with four St. George crosses, strode from one side of the bridge to the other, his heavy spurs jingling. To the abuse of the mob he turned a grim, pock-marked face:

"Call yourselves gentlemen, and shouting like that!" he cried, the ends of his twisted moustache quivering. "I can't allow you to cross the bridge. In case of insubordination I shall be obliged to open fire."

This only made the hotheads shout the more.

"The soldiers won't fire!" they cried.

"Who stuck you up there, you lousy hound?"

The N.C.O. turned upon them again, but though his voice was the hoarse, imperious voice of a soldier, there was that in his words which was felt by all in those days—an alarmed perplexity. The hotheads sensed this, and tried, shoving and swearing, to force a passage.

Suddenly a long, lean fellow, with crooked pince-nez, and a scarf wound round his long neck, cried out in loud, echoing tones:

"Traffic impeded, barriers everywhere, the bridges cut off—outrageous! Are we, or are we not, entitled to move freely about the town? Fellow citizens, I propose we take no notice of the soldiers, and cross the ice to the other side!"

"That's right! Over the ice! Hurrah!"

And several persons instantly ran towards the snow-covered stone steps leading to the river. The tall man, the ends of his scarf fluttering, strode resolutely over the ice below the bridge. The soldiers, leaning over, shouted:

"Hi! You come back! We'll shoot! Come back, you lanky devil!"

But the tall man strode on without looking back. More and more people began following him in single file, at a trot. They clattered down from the embankment on to the ice, one at a time, their running figures showing black against the snow. The soldiers shouted to them from the bridge—the runners, their hands to the sides of their mouths, shouted back. One of the soldiers made as if to take aim, but his neighbour touched him on the shoulder, and he did not fire.

Nobody had any definite plan, as it afterwards turned out, but when the people saw the barriers at the bridges and crossroads, all, obeying the ancient impulse which makes everyone long to do precisely what is at the moment forbidden, were seized by the desire to cross, and to gather in crowds. Imaginations already sufficiently inflamed were

worked up to a white heat. A rumour that there was some unknown person behind all this disorder, spread like wild-fire.

Towards the close of the next day, units of the Pavlov Regiment were drawn up along Nevsky Prospekt, and ordered to open longitudinal fire on the groups of the curious, and on individual passers-by. People began to realize that something like a revolution was on foot.

But nobody knew where its headquarters were, or who was organizing it—neither the commander of the troops, nor the police; least of all, Protopopov, dictator, royal favourite, and cloth-merchant, whose head the landed proprietor Naumov had broken, smashing the door panel of the Troitsk Hotel, Simbirsk, in the process; which injury resulted in migraine and neurasthenia, and subsequently, when the government of the Russian Empire was entrusted to him, in fatal confusion. The revolution had its headquarters everywhere, in every house, in the minds, seething with wild imaginings, bitterness and dissatisfaction, of all citizens. The impossibility of discovering the headquarters of the revolution was ominous. The police caught at shadows. What they really needed to do was to arrest the two million four hundred thousand inhabitants of Petrograd.

Ivan Ilyich spent the whole day in the streets—his head seemed to be going round all the time, as doubtless was the case with everyone else. He sensed the mounting excitement, growing to something like madness, in the town—everyone seemed caught up in a kind of all-embracing dizziness, an incoherent mass, wandering excitedly about the streets, seeking for a sign, for a flash of lightning which should blind them and fuse them into coherency.

The firing along Nevsky Prospekt did not have much effect. People flocked like herds of wild beasts to look at the two corpses—a woman in a print skirt, and an old man in a racoon coat, lying at the corner of Vladimir Street. When the shooting grew more intensive, people dispersed, and then once again started creeping along, hugging the walls.

At dusk the firing died down. A chill wind cleared the sky and a sombre sunset glowed amidst clouds piled up over the sea. The thin sickle moon hung low over the town, just where the sky was as black as pitch.

The street lamps were not lighted that night. The windows were dark, and the entrances to houses closed. Rifles were stacked all along the misty desert of Nevsky Prospekt. The tall figures of sentries were visible at street corners. The moonlight shone now on a plate-glass window, now on a strip of railway line, now on the steel of a bayonet. All was still and quiet. But in every house frenzied descriptions of what had occurred were being muttered in dull bleating murmurs into the telephone receivers.

On the morning of February the twenty-fifth, Znamensky Square was filled with troops and police. Mounted police on thin-legged, prancing chestnut horses were drawn up in front of the Northern Hotel. Foot police, in their black coats, posted themselves round the statue of Alexander III or scattered in groups about the square. Drawn up in front of the station were gay, bearded Cossacks, the tall fur caps jauntily dented, bundles of hay strapped to their saddles. In the direction of Nevsky Prospekt could be seen the dull grey uniforms of the Pavlov Regiment.

Ivan Ilyich, suitcase in hand, climbed on to the raised end of the stone coping at the side of the paved slope leading to the entrance of the station, where he had a good view of the whole square.

In the middle of it, on a blood-red slab of granite, mounted on a huge horse, its bronze head bent under the weight of its rider, sat the emperor, squat and massive, his grim shoulders and his round cap covered with snow. Shouting, whistling, swearing crowds were pushing their way along five streets towards the square, and up to the base of the monument.

As on the preceding day at the bridge, the soldiers—especially the Cossacks—were riding in couples right up to the people pouring in from every direction, exchanging oaths and jeering remarks. Silence, and obvious indecision prevailed among the groups of the burly, morose policemen. Ivan Ilyich well knew the anxiety of awaiting the order to go into action: the enemy is already in sight, and everyone knows what is to be done, but the order is delayed, and the minutes drag out painfully. Suddenly one of the doors to the station flew open with a clatter, and a pale officer of police in a short coat, with colonel's insignia, appeared at the top of the steps. Drawing himself up he glanced over the square, his pale eyes resting a moment on the face of

Ivan Ilyich. Then he ran lightly down the steps, the Cossacks making way for him on either side, and spoke to the Captain of the Cossacks, sticking out his chin, so that his beard jutted upwards. The Captain listened with a wry smile, slouching in the saddle. The Colonel nodded towards Old Nevsky Street and crossed the snow-covered square on springy footsteps. A police officer ran up to him, his huge stomach tightly belted, his hand raised in a trembling salute. And from the direction of Old Nevsky Street the cries of the advancing crowd grew louder, and at last singing could be distinguished. Someone seized Ivan Ilyich's sleeve violently, and an excited, hatless man, with a livid scratch on his cheek, scrambled up beside him.

"Brothers! Cossacks!" he shouted in the rending, terrifying voice which is heard just before murder and bloodshed are committed, that wild, crazy voice which strikes horror to the heart, and brings a film of madness over the eyes. "Brothers, they're killing me. . . . Help! . . . Murder!"

The Cossacks, turning in their saddles, gazed at him in silence, pale and wide-eyed.

Just then the heads of the approaching crowd of the Kolpino-district workers seethed black in Old Nevsky Street. A damp flag of red bunting was flapping in the wind. The mounted police drew away from the front of the Northern Hotel, and all of a sudden their broad blades flashed naked in their hands. Frantic cries came from the crowd. Again Ivan Ilyich caught sight of the Colonel of police, running, holding the holster of his revolver, and waving the Cossacks on with his other hand.

Ice splinters and stones flew from the crowd of Kolpino workers in the direction of the Colonel and the mounted police. The thin-legged chestnut horses pranced frantically. There were faint reports of revolver shots, and puffs of smoke could be seen around the base of the monument: the police had fired at the Kolpino workers. And immediately after, in the ranks of the Cossacks, ten paces away from Ivan Ilyich, a chestnut-coloured Cossack mare with a curving muzzle, reared; its rider, bending over its neck, urged it towards the Colonel of police in a few bounds, drawing his sword as he galloped; there was a swish of the brandished sword, and he jerked the horse on to its hind legs again. The Cossacks moved in a body to the scene of the murder. The crowd,



breaking the barriers, poured into the square. A few shots rang out, their report almost drowned by the general shout of hurrah.

"Telegin—what are you doing here?"

"I must get away today whatever happens. By goods train, in the engine cab—I don't care how!"

"Forget it! You can't go away now! It's the revolution, old man!"

It was Antoshka Arnoldov, unshaven, shabby, his eyeballs distended, the lids reddened.

"Did you see how he sliced off the police officer's head?" he cried, digging his fingers into the lapels of Ivan Ilyich's coat. "It bounced like a football—marvellous! You don't understand, you idiot—it's the revolution!"

Antoshka was raving as if in delirium. They were standing at the entrance to the station, hemmed in by the crowd.

"This morning the Lithuanian and Volinsk regiments refused to fire. . . . A company of the Pavlov Regiment went into the streets, armed. The whole town's upside down, no one understands a thing. The soldiers are as thick as flies on Nevsky Prospekt, afraid to go back to barracks. . . ."

\* XXXVI \*

Dasha and Katya, in fur coats, and with down shawls over their heads, were walking swiftly along the dimly lighted Malaya Nikitskaya Street. A thin crust of ice crackled beneath their feet. The clear horned moon was climbing the cold pale-green sky. Here and there a dog barked in a yard. Dasha laughed into the damp softness of her shawl, as she listened to the crackling of the ice.

"If only somebody would invent an instrument, Katya, and put it here," she said, laying her hand on her breast, "extraordinary things would be recorded."

Dasha hummed softly. Katya took her arm.

"Do come on!"

A few paces further on Dasha again came to a stop.

"Katya—do you believe it really is the revolution?"

Their eyes were dazzled from afar by the electric light over the entrance to the Lawyers' Club, where, at half past nine that day, under the influence of the crazy rumours from

Petrograd, a public meeting had been announced by the Cadets, for the exchange of opinions, and to arrive at a common mode of action in these anxious days.

The sisters ran up the stairs to the second floor, where, merely throwing back their shawls without taking off their coats, they entered a hall, full of people listening eagerly to a corpulent, rosy, bearded gentleman, who was gesticulating gracefully with his big hands.

"Events are developing with dizzying rapidity," he was saying in a fine bass voice. "Yesterday in Petrograd all power was transferred to General Khabalov, who had the following notice posted all over the town: 'During the last few days, disorders accompanied by violence and attempts on the lives of military and police authorities have taken place in Petrograd. All gatherings in the street are hereby forbidden. The population of Petrograd is warned that I have confirmed the order to the troops to have resort to arms, and to stop at nothing for the restoration of order in the capital. . . .'"

"Butchers!" came from the depth of the hall in the rich bass of a divinity student.

"This announcement, as was to be expected, was the last straw. Twenty-five thousand soldiers from the Petrograd garrison, of all arms and services, have gone over to the insurgents. . . ."

Before he could finish speaking, the hall rang with applause. People leaped on to their chairs, shouting and gesticulating, as if they would pierce the old order through and through. The speaker gazed on the turbulent audience, smiling broadly, then, raising his hand, went on:

"A telephone message of the utmost importance has just been received." He felt in the pocket of his check coat and unfolded a sheet of paper.

"A direct wire message has today been sent by President of the State Duma, Rodzyanko, to the tsar: 'Situation serious. Anarchy in the capital. Government helpless. Transport, supplies and fuel in complete confusion. Irregular firing going on in the streets. Troops firing on one another in some cases. Essential to entrust someone enjoying the confidence of the country with the formation of a new government. There must be no delay. Any delay would be fatal. I pray God that in such an hour the responsibility may not fall upon the crowned head.'"

The rosy gentleman lowered the sheet of paper and let his shining eyes roam over the hall. Never had the people of Moscow been present at such an exciting performance!

"Gentlemen! We are on the brink of an impending event—the greatest in our history," he continued, in his rumbling, velvety tones. "Even now, it may be," here he extended his arm like the statue of Danton, "the dreams of so many generations are being fulfilled over there, and the martyred shades of the Decembrists are being avenged..."

"Oh, God!" moaned a woman in irrepressible excitement.

"Perhaps the whole of Russia will tomorrow be fused in one bright, fraternal choir—liberty!"

"Hurrah! Liberty!" cried several voices.

The gentleman sank on to his chair, passing the back of his hand over his brow. A tall narrow-visaged man with long flaxen hair, and a dead-looking russet-coloured beard, rose from his seat at a corner of the table. Without looking at anyone in the audience he began speaking in ironic tones:

"I heard just now certain comrades shouting: 'Hurrah for Liberty!' Good! What could be better—arrest Nikolai the Second at Mogilev, impeach the ministers, kick out the governors, liquidate the police... Unfurl the red banner of revolution... A good beginning. According to information received the revolutionary process has begun well and energetically. Apparently this time it won't miscarry. But the gentleman who spoke just before me was very eloquent. He expressed—if I understood him aright—complete satisfaction at the imminence of revolution, and proposed in the near future the fusion of the whole of Russia in a fraternal choir..."

The flaxen-haired man took out his handkerchief and put it to his lips, as if to hide a smile. But a flush spread over his cheekbones, and he coughed, his bony shoulders heaving. Somebody behind Dasha, who was sharing a chair with her sister, asked:

"Who's that speaking?"

"Comrade Kuzma," came the reply in a rapid whisper. "He was a member of the 1905 Soviet of Workers' Deputies. Only lately returned from exile."

"Personally I would be inclined to moderate my raptures if I were the previous speaker," continued Comrade Kuzma, and all of a sudden his waxen countenance became angry

and resolute. "Twelve million peasants have been prepared for the slaughter, they are still at the front. . . . Millions of workers are gasping in cellars, and standing famishing in bread lines. Do you intend to sing in fraternal choir, tramping on the workers the while?"

Hissing was heard in the audience, and an indignant voice exclaimed: "This is provocation!" The rosy gentleman shrugged his shoulders and touched the bell. Comrade Kuzma went on speaking:

"The imperialists have flung Europe into a monstrous war; the bourgeois classes, from top to bottom, have declared it a sacred one—this war for world markets, for the unprecedented triumph of capital. . . . Those yellow swine, the Social-Democrats, have lent their support to the bosses, assiduously repeating: 'Quite so! It is a national, holy war.' The peasants and workers have been sent to the slaughter. . . . Who, I ask you, who raised a voice during these bloody days?"

"What's that he says? Who is he, anyhow? Make him shut up!" came in furious voices. There was an uproar. Some leaped up, waving their hands.

"...The hour has struck. . . . The flame of revolution is bound to spread into the very thick of the peasants and workers. . . ."

The rest of what he was saying could not be heard, for the noise in the body of the hall. A few men in morning coats rushed up to the table. Comrade Kuzma backed off the platform and disappeared behind a door. In his place rose a famous authority on the education of children.

"The outrageous utterances of the previous speaker. . . ."

Just then a tender, moved voice said in Dasha's ear:

"Hullo, darling!"

Dasha got up instantly, without so much as looking round—in the doorway stood Ivan Ilyich. She looked at him—the handsomest man in the world—her own man! Once more, as constantly happened to him, he was struck with the fact that Dasha was not a bit as he had visualized her in absence, but infinitely more beautiful: a hot flush spread over her cheeks, and her blue-grey eyes seemed fathomless—twin lakes. She was perfect, just as she was, she was perfect.

"How are you?" she said quietly, taking his arm, and they went out of the hall and into the street.

Once outside, Dasha stood still, smiling and gazing at Ivan Ilyich. Then she sighed, lifted her hands to his shoulders, and kissed him on the lips. The utterly feminine charm of a slightly pungent scent came from her. She took his arm again in silence, and they walked over the crackling film of ice, shining in the light of the sickle moon, which hung low over the street in the distance.

"I do so love you, Ivan! I've been longing to see you!"

"I couldn't get away—you know that. . . ."

"You mustn't be cross with me for writing you those horrid letters—I can't write. . . ."

Ivan Ilyich halted and looked into her smiling face, turned up to him in silence. The down shawl made her look very sweet and simple, and the line of her eyebrows showed dark beneath it. He drew her gently towards himself, and she pressed close to him, shifting her feet, and still gazing into his eyes. He kissed her again, and then they walked on.

"Are you here for long, Ivan?"

"I don't know—anything may happen. . . ."

"Yes—it's the revolution, you know."

"Fancy! I travelled in the engine cab!"

"Ivan, you know. . . ."

Dasha got into step with him and fixed her eyes on the toes of her boots.

"What?"

"I'm going back with you—to your flat."

Ivan Ilyich made no reply, but Dasha could feel him taking great gulps of air. Tenderness and pity for him welled up in her.

## \* XXXVII \*

The next day was only remarkable as a confirmation of the theory of the relativity of time. It took Ivan Ilyich over a year to go by cab from his hotel in Tverskaya Street to a street off the Arbat.

"You can't ride in a droshky for fifty kopeks any more, sir!" the izvozchik told him. "The people have taken things into their own hands in Petrograd. And we'll soon be doing the same in Moscow. Look at that policeman standing there! I'd like to drive up to him, the son-of-a-bitch, and slash him

in the face with my whip! Just you wait, gentlemen, we'll settle with everyone!"

Dasha met Ivan Ilyich on the threshold of the dining room.

In her dressing gown, her ash-blond hair pinned up hastily, she was redolent of soap and water. The bell of time struck, and time stopped. Now there was nothing but Dasha's words, Dasha's laughter, Dasha's soft hair, radiant in the morning sunlight. Ivan Ilyich became restless when Dasha so much as moved to the other end of the table. Dasha opened doors in the sideboard, raising her arms, the wide sleeves of her dressing gown slipping backwards. It seemed to Ivan Ilyich that people simply didn't have arms like that, but the two white vaccination marks beneath the shoulder showed that they were, after all, human arms. Dasha took out a cup, and turning her fair head, said something remarkable, and laughed.

She made Ivan Ilyich drink several cups of coffee. She uttered words, and Ivan Ilyich uttered words, but apparently human words only meant something when time behaved normally—today words held no meaning. Katya, sitting in the dining room, heard Dasha and Telegin chattering away eagerly, forgetting immediately what they had said, whether it was only something trivial about the coffee, the leather dressing case, the head chopped off in Petrograd, or Dasha's hair, so strangely golden in the bright sunshine.

The maid brought in the papers. Katya unfolded the *Russian Record*, gave a gasp, and began reading aloud the tsar's order for the dissolution of the State Duma. Dasha and Telegin were perfectly amazed by this, but Katya had to go on reading to herself. "Come to my room," said Dasha to Telegin, and led him along the dark corridor. She went in first, saying in rapid tones: "Wait a minute—don't look!", and put something white into a drawer.

Ivan Ilyich had never been in Dasha's room till now—her dressing table, strewn with numerous mysterious articles, her narrow white bed with its two pillows, one big and one little (Dasha slept with her head on the big one, placing the smaller one under her elbow before falling asleep). At the window was a capacious armchair with the familiar down shawl flung over the back of it.

Making Telegin sit in this armchair, Dasha pulled up a stool for herself, and sat down opposite him. Her elbows on her knees, her chin propped on the palms of her hands, she gazed unblinkingly into his face and ordered him to tell her how much he loved her. For a moment the bell of time tolled again.

"If I were to be given everything that exists, Dasha," said Telegin, "the whole earth, it wouldn't be any good to me. D'you understand me?" Dasha nodded. "What good am I to myself, if I'm alone? What do I need myself for?" Dasha nodded. "Why should I eat, go about, sleep? What are these arms and legs for? Supposing I were to become fabulously rich—what would be the good? Think what misery to be all alone!" Dasha nodded. "But now, with you sitting there. . . . There's no me any more. . . . All I feel is that it's you, it's happiness. You—that's everything. I look at you and my head swims. I can't believe you're really breathing, living, and—mine. . . . Dasha, do you understand what I mean?"

"I remember how we sat on deck," said Dasha, "and the wind was blowing, and the wine sparkled in the glasses, and I suddenly felt as if we were drifting towards happiness. . . ."

"Do you remember how blue the shadows were?"

Dasha nodded, and it really seemed to her that she could remember some lovely blue shadows. She remembered the sea gulls flying after the steamer, the low banks, the gleaming path of sunlight flung far over the water and ending up, as it had seemed to her, in a radiant blue ocean of happiness. Dasha even remembered the dress she had worn. . . . And how many weary years had passed since then. . . .

That evening Ekaterina Dmitrevna came running back from the Lawyers' Club, excited and elated, and told them:

"In Petrograd all power is in the hands of the Duma Committee; the ministers have been arrested, but terrible rumours are afloat. They say the tsar has left army headquarters, and General Ivanov is marching to quell the disturbances in Petrograd with a whole corps. . . . And tomorrow the Kremlin and the Arsenal are going to be stormed. . . . Ivan Ilyich—Dasha and I will come to you in the morning to look at the revolution!"

From the hotel window the black stream of people could be seen slowly moving along narrow Tverskaya Street—everywhere heads, caps with stiff peaks, ordinary caps, shawls, the yellow patches of faces, moving, moving. . . . Onlookers in all the windows, boys on the rooftops. . . .

Ekaterina Dmitrevna, her veil raised above her eyebrows, stood at the window, reaching out now for Telegin's, now for Dasha's hand, and repeating:

"Isn't it terrible? Isn't it terrible?"

"I assure you, Ekaterina Dmitrevna, the feeling in the town is absolutely peaceful," said Ivan Ilyich. "Just before you came I ran over to the Kremlin. Negotiations are going on there, it seems the Arsenal will be surrounded without a shot being fired. . . ."

"Why are they all going there, then? Look what a lot of people! What are they going to do?"

Dasha's glance roved from the restless ocean of heads to the outlines of roofs and towers. It was a soft, misty morning. A flock of crows was circling in the distance, above the gilt cupolas of the Kremlin churches and the imperial eagles on its pointed towers.

It seemed to Dasha that the ice had broken on great rivers which were now flooding the earth, and that she and her beloved, had been caught up in their current, and now all she could do was to hold tight to his hand. Her heart fluttered in alarm and bliss, like the heart of a bird soaring in the sky.

"I want to see it all—let's go out," said Katya.

The Duma, the headquarters of the revolution, a dingy brick building adorned with bottle-shaped pillars, balustrades, little balconies and towers, was decked out in red flags. Strips of red bunting were wound round the pillars, and hung from the ledge over the main entrance. There were four grey cannons mounted on high wheels on the frozen paving stones in front of the porch. Machine gunners with bunches of red ribbon on their shoulder straps were seated crouching inside the porch. Immense crowds were gazing with pleasurable horror at the red flags and the dark and



dusty windows of the Duma. Every now and then a small excited figure appeared in the little balcony over the porch and shouted something inaudible, gesticulating the while, and was greeted with a joyful roar from the crowd.

Looking their fill at the flags and machine guns, people walked in the dirty, thawing snow through the deep arch of the Iverskaya Gate, into the Red Square, where, in front of the Spassky and Nikolsky gates of the Kremlin, the insurgent military divisions were negotiating with emissaries from the reserve regiment locked up inside.

Katya, Dasha and Telegin were carried by the crowd right up to the entrance of the Duma. A shout, getting louder and louder, came from Tverskaya Street and filled the whole square.

"Comrades, let us pass! Observe the law, Comrades!" was heard in youthful voices. Four schoolboys, brandishing rifles, and a pretty, dishevelled girl holding a sword, were pushing their way through the crowd, which reluctantly made way for them. They were leading prisoners—ten policemen—huge whiskered men with their hands tied behind their backs, and gloomy, downcast faces. At their head was an inspector, his shaven, bluish head capless, dried blood turning black on the temples. His bright red-brown eyes travelled rapidly over the jeering faces of the crowd; the shoulder straps on his coat had been violently torn off, bringing away tufts of cloth.

"Now you're getting what was coming to you, my bucks!" shouted the crowd.

"We've had enough of your browbeating!"

"Your day is over. . . ."

"Accursed band! Bulls!"

"Get hold of them and give them a taste of torture!"

"Come on, fellows--all together!"

"Comrades, Comrades, let us pass, observe revolutionary order!" shouted the schoolboys hoarsely. They ran up to the entrance, pushing the policemen in front of them, and disappeared inside the big doors. A few people—Katya, Dasha and Telegin among them—pushed in after them.

In the bare, high, dimly lit entrance hall, machine gunners squatted on the damp floor beside their guns. A chubby-faced student, apparently half-stunned with noise and fatigue, was shouting to all comers:

"I know nothing about that! Your pass!"

Some showed him their passes, others, with a wave of the hand, ascended the broad staircase to the second floor. There, in the broad corridors, against the walls, lay about or squatted silent soldiers, dust-covered and drowsy, clinging to their rifles. Some were munching bread, some were snoring, their legs in the traditional wrappings tucked under them. Past them thronged the crowd of sightseers, scanning the strange notices pinned to the doors, staring at the hoarse-voiced commissars, who were running from one room to another, in the last stages of excitement.

Katya, Dasha and Telegin, having gazed their fill at all these marvels, pushed their way into a hall containing two tiers of vast windows hung with faded purple curtains, and benches upholstered in purple, ranged in a semicircular amphitheatre. On the main wall, empty gilt frames once surrounding the royal portraits, enclosed black patches six feet high, in front of which, her bronze mantle thrown back, stood a marble Catherine, smiling graciously and subtly upon her subjects.

On the benches of the amphitheatre, their chins propped on their hands, lounged weary, sallow, unshaven men. A few were asleep, their heads resting on the desk before them. Others were listlessly peeling the outer skin from lumps of sausage, and eating bread. A few haggard young men in black shirts were sitting at a long table with a green, gold-fringed cloth, in front of the smiling Catherine. One of them had a reddish beard and long hair. . . .

"Look, Dasha!" cried Katya. "There's Comrade Kuzma at the table!"

Just then a short-haired girl with a pointed nose approached Comrade Kuzma and whispered something in his ear. He listened to her without turning his head, and rose, saying:

"Mayor Guchkov has declared a second time that arms will not be issued to the workers. I propose voting without debate for a protest against the action of the Revolutionary Committee."

Telegin managed to find out at last, by questioning an undergrown schoolboy, conscientiously smoking a cigarette, that a meeting of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies which had already lasted two days, was in progress.

In the dinner hour, the soldiers of the reserve regiment posted in the Kremlin, catching sight of the smoke from the field kitchens in the Red Square, surrendered and opened the gates. A shout rang out over the square, and caps were flung up. On to the Lobnoye Mesto, where once had lain the False Dmitri\* (dead, naked, a sheep's mask over his face and a fool's trumpet across his belly), where tsars had been acclaimed and anathemized, where favours and coercions had been proclaimed to the Russian people—on to this slight mound, alternately overgrown with dock leaves and drenched in blood, there clambered a little soldier in a shabby greatcoat, bowing, and pulling his tall cap over his ears with his two hands, trying to say something which was lost in the din. He was ever such a skinny little soldier, raked in by the very last mobilization from some Godforsaken spot and yet a lady with her feathered hat awry on her head, pushed forward to give him a kiss, and he was dragged down from the Lobnoye Mesto, and carried off shoulder high with shouts of triumph.

Just then a dashing fellow made his way out of the crowd on Tverskaya Street, just opposite the General Governor's mansion, climbed up on to the monument to Skobelev, and tied a scrap of red stuff on the General's sword. There were cries of "Hurrah!" Certain mysterious individuals made their way from a side street into the Secret Police Department, and soon there was the sound of falling glass, and clouds of smoke came rolling out. There were more cries of "Hurrah!" A well-known woman writer shed tears at the foot of the Pushkin monument on Tverskoi Boulevard, and uttered a speech on the dawn of the new life, after which, with the help of a schoolboy, she stuck a red flag into the hand of the pensive Pushkin. Cries of "Hurrah!" again came from the crowd. The whole town seemed to be intoxicated that day. Nobody went home till late at night; people gathered in groups, talked, shed tears of joy, embraced, expecting the arrival of telegrams from goodness knows where at any moment. After three years of misery, hate and blood, the "man in the street" was letting himself go, pouring out his soul unrestrained.

\* The third pretender to the Russian throne to use the name of Dmitri, the son of Ivan the Terrible. He was executed in 1613.

Katya, Dasha and Telegin went home in the dusk. There they discovered that the maid Liza had gone to a meeting on Prechistenski Boulevard, and that the cook had locked herself up in the kitchen and was giving vent to hollow shrieks. Katya had the utmost difficulty in getting her to open the door.

"What's the matter with you, Marfusha?"

"They've killed our ts-s-sar," she exclaimed, covering her thick lips, swollen with crying, with one hand. She smelt of spirits.

"What nonsense you talk," said Katya in annoyance. "Nobody's killed him!"

She put the kettle on the gas and went to lay the table. Dasha threw herself down on the drawing-room sofa, and Telegin seated himself at her feet.

"Ivan, darling," said Dasha, "if I happen to go to sleep, wake me up when tea is ready. I'm longing for tea."

She turned on her side, placed the palm of her hand beneath her cheek, and murmured, in a voice already sleepy:

"I do love you so!"

Dasha's down shawl gleamed in the darkness. Her breathing became inaudible. Ivan Ilyich sat motionless—his heart was full. A light appeared at the back of the room through a chink in the door, and then the door opened and Katya entered and perched herself beside Ivan Ilyich on the hard bolster at the end of the sofa, encircling one knee with her hands.

"Has Dasha gone to sleep?" she asked, after a pause.

"She asked to be waked for tea."

"Marfusha is howling in the kitchen that the tsar's been killed. What is going to happen, Ivan Ilyich? It seems as if all dams had been burst. My heart aches—I'm worried about Nikolai Ivanovich. Do be a darling and send him a telegram as soon as possible—tomorrow.... And when do you and Dasha mean to go to Petrograd?"

Ivan Ilyich made no reply, and Katya turned towards him and looked into his face with great eyes, like Dasha's, only more womanly and grave; then she smiled, drew Ivan Ilyich to her and kissed his forehead.

The next morning the whole town poured out into the streets. Lorries filled with soldiers, bristling with bayonets

and swords, rolled along Tverskaya Street through dense crowds, to the accompaniment of ceaseless cheering. Small boys rode astride rumbling cannon. Young girls with raised swords and tense faces, and ruthless schoolboys armed to the teeth, stood among heaps of dirty snow beside the pavement to keep order—these were the volunteer militia. Shopkeepers were climbing up stepladders and pulling the tsarist eagles from their signs. A few sickly-looking girls from a tobacco factory were marching about the town with a portrait of Leo Tolstoy, who regarded all these marvels severely from beneath knitted brows. It did not seem possible that there could ever be war or hatred any more—all that was needed was to get just a little higher, on to some lofty tower, and hang out a red banner, and the whole world would realize that we are all brothers, that the only power in the world is joy, liberty, love, life. . . .

When telegrams arrived with the astounding news of the tsar's abdication, of the handing over of power to the Grand Duke Mikhail, and of the latter's refusal of the crown, nobody was particularly struck: still greater wonders were to be looked for nowadays.

In the transparent depths of the sky, a star shimmered over the uneven lines of roofs and the orange sunset. The bare branches of the lime trees were black and motionless. It was quite dark beneath them, and the frozen puddles on the pavement crunched underfoot. Standing still without relaxing her grasp on Ivan Ilyich's arm, Dasha peeped through the low railing at a light in the small embrasured window of the church of St. Nicholas.

The tiny church and its yard were in shadow, beneath the limes. A door banged in the distance, and a short man, in a coat reaching the ground, and a hat with a turned-down brim, crossed the yard, his felt boots crunching the snow. He could be heard jingling keys and slowly ascending the stairs to the belfry.

"The sexton's gone to ring the bell," whispered Dasha, and lifted her head. The sunset was reflected in the gilt of the small dome over the belfry.

The bell which had for three hundred years summoned the congregation to commit their souls to God before the coming night boomed out. In a flash, Ivan Ilyich remembered the shrine with the silently weeping woman in a white

coat on its threshold, a dead child on her knees. He squeezed Dasha's hand hard with his elbow. She looked at him, inquiry in her eyes.

"Want to go in?" she asked in a rapid whisper. "Come on!"

Ivan Ilyich smiled broadly. Dasha frowned and stamped her feet in their little boots.

"Is it so very funny, when you're walking arm in arm with the one you love best in the world, and see a light in the window, that you should think of just stepping in and getting married?"

She resumed her hold on Ivan Ilyich's arm.

"Now, do you understand me?" she said.

### \* XXXIX \*

"Citizens—soldiers of the henceforth free Russian Army—the unusual honour has fallen to me to congratulate you, this joyous day, on which the chains of slavery have been broken. In three days, without a drop of blood being spilt, the Russian people have accomplished the greatest revolution in history. The crowned tsar Nikolai has abdicated, the tsarist ministers have been arrested, Mikhail, the heir to the throne, has rejected the onerous burden of the crown. Henceforward the power in its entirety has been transferred to the people. The Provisional Government has taken its place at the head of the State in order, in the shortest possible time, to carry out elections to an All-Russian Constituent Assembly, on the basis of a direct, universal, equal and secret vote. . . . We now hail the Russian Revolution, the Constituent Assembly, the Provisional Government. . . ."

"Hurrah-aha-!" came in a prolonged roar from thousands of soldiers' voices. Nikolai Ivanovich Smokovnikov drew a long khaki-coloured handkerchief from the pocket of his suède jacket, and mopped his neck, face and beard. He was speaking from an improvised platform, which could only be reached by climbing the crossbeams. Behind him stood battalion commander Tetkin, recently promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel. His weather-beaten countenance, with the short beard and fleshy nose, expressed profound concentration. When the cheering burst out he raised his hand to the peak of his cap in a nervous salute. Some two

thousand soldiers were standing before the platform on a level field, where the earth showed here and there in black patches against the grimy snow. Unarmed, in tin hats, their rumpled greatcoats hanging loose, they listened open-mouthed to the remarkable words which this gentleman, who was as red as a turkey cock, was uttering. Far away, in the grey mist, could be seen the chimneys of a half-ruined village. Further on were the German positions. A few ragged crows were flying over the desolate field.

"Soldiers!" continued Nikolai Ivanovich, extending his hand with the fingers outspread. The blood had rushed to his neck. "Only yesterday you were subordinate ranks, an inarticulate herd sent to the slaughter by the tsarist military staff. You were not asked what it was you were dying for. . . . You were flogged for minor offences and shot without trial." (Lieutenant Colonel Tetkin cleared his throat, shifted from one foot to another, but kept silence, and again put his head on one side, listening attentively.) "I, who have been appointed Military Commissar on the Western Front by the Provisional Government declare to you—", here Nikolai Ivanovich clenched his fingers as if clutching at a bridle, "—that there are no subordinate ranks any more. The term has been abolished. From henceforward, soldiers, you are equal citizens of the Russian State: there is no difference between soldiers and army commanders any more. The terms 'Your Honour,' 'Your Excellency,' 'Your Highness' have been abolished. From now on you will say: 'Good day, Mr. General,' 'Yes, Mr. General,' 'No, Mr. General.' The humiliating response 'Yes, Your Excellency! No, Your Excellency!' has been abolished. The necessity for a soldier to salute all officers of whatsoever rank has been abolished for ever. You can shake hands with a general if you like. . . ."

"Ho-ho-ho!" laughed the soldiers gleefully. Tetkin himself smiled, blinking nervously.

"And, finally, and most important of all, is this, soldiers! Formerly it was the tsarist government which carried on the war, from now on the people—you yourselves—will conduct it. The Provisional Government therefore proposes that you form Soldiers' Committees in all military units—company, battalion, regimental and so on, up to the Army Committee. Elect to the Committees comrades whom you can trust. From henceforth the finger of a soldier will

move over a military map side by side with the Army Commander's pencil. . . . Soldiers, I congratulate you on the greatest conquest of the revolution!"

Shouts of "Hurrah!" again rang out over the field. Tetkin stood at attention, saluting. His face had gone grey. Cries arose from the crowd:

"Are we going to make peace with the Germans soon?"

"How much soap will be issued to each man?"

"What about leave? What are the instructions?"

"Mr. Commissar, how will it be now? Shall we have to elect a king now? Who will carry on the war?"

Nikolai Ivanovich got down from the platform so as to answer questions better, and he was immediately surrounded by excited soldiers. Lieutenant Colonel Tetkin, leaning against the railing of the platform, watched the bare, cropped head and fat neck of the Military Commissar moving about, circling here and there, disappearing amidst the mass of tin hats. One of the soldiers, a red-haired, jeering fellow with his greatcoat hanging loose from his shoulders (Tetkin knew him well, he was from a telephone company), seized Nikolai Ivanovich by the belt of his tunic and began addressing him, glancing all round:

"Mr. Commissar, you spoke us fair, and we listened to you the same. Now you give me an answer to my question."

The other soldiers buzzed in joyful anticipation and pressed nearer. Lieutenant Colonel Tetkin frowned and got down anxiously from the platform.

"This is my question," said the soldier, his black fingernail almost touching Nikolai Ivanovich's nose. "I've had a letter from my village telling me my cow's dead. We have no horse any more, and my wife and children have to go out begging for crusts. . . . So have you the right now to shoot me for deserting? That's what I want to know."

"If your personal prosperity is dearer to you than liberty, then betray your cause, betray it like a Judas, and Russia will cast it in your teeth that you were unworthy to be a soldier of the Revolutionary Army. Go home!" shouted Nikolai Ivanovich harshly.

"Don't shout at me!"

"Who are you to shout at us?"

"Soldiers!" Nikolai Ivanovich stood on tiptoe. "There's been a misunderstanding. . . . The first duty of the revolution



is to be true to our allies. . . . The free revolutionary Russian army must fling itself with renewed strength on freedom's worst enemy—imperialist Germany."

"Have you ever helped to feed lice in the trenches yourself?" cried a rough voice.

"He's never seen a louse in his life!"

"Give him a couple to start breeding. . . ."

"Don't talk to us about freedom, talk to us about war. We've been fighting three years. . . . It's all very well for you—you've been sitting at home filling your belly. . . . We want to know how to stop the war."

"Soldiers!" shouted Nikolai Ivanovich again. "The banner of revolution has been raised—liberty and a fight to a victorious finish. . . ."

"Damn the silly fool!"

"Look here—we've been fighting three years, and we haven't seen any victory. . . ."

"They got rid of the tsar on purpose—he wouldn't let them go on with the war. . . ."

"He's been bribed, Comrades!"

Lieutenant Colonel Tetkin, elbowing his way through the soldiers, pushed up to Nikolai Ivanovich just in time to see a huge, black-haired, round-shouldered artilleryman seize the front of the Commissar's coat, shaking him and shouting in his face the while:

"What have you come here for? Tell me that—what have you come here for? You've come to sell us out, you son-of-a-bitch!"

The back of Nikolai Ivanovich's round head seemed to recede into his neck, and his upturned beard, which looked as if it has been stuck on his face, quivered helplessly. In his effort to push his assailant away, his convulsively trembling fingers tore at the collar of the soldier's tunic. Scowling, the man snatched off his tin helmet and struck Nikolai Ivanovich forcibly with it, again and again, over the head and face.

\* XL \*

The night watchman and a militiaman were sitting in front of Muraveichik's jewellery store, talking under their breath. The street was empty, the shops shut. The March

wind was whistling in the naked branches of the acacias, and tearing with a rustling sound at the advertisement for a "Freedom Loan" stuck on a fence. The bright southern moon, quivering like a jellyfish, hung high over the town.

"He happened to be taking his ease at his Yalta villa," the night watchman was saying in measured tones. "He'd just gone out for a walk, dressed up in white trousers, with all his medals on, and someone hands him a telegram, out in the street: the abdication of His Majesty the tsar. And he, dear soul, read the telegram, and burst into tears in front of everybody. . . ."

"Tchk! Tchk! Tchk!"

"And in a week he was dismissed."

"What for?"

"For being a governor—it's not allowed nowadays."

"Tchk! Tchk! Tchk!" said the militiaman, watching a lean cat which was cautiously stealing in the moonlit shade beneath the acacias, on business of its own.

"...and His Majesty the tsar was living in Mogilev just then, in the midst of his troops. Well, so there he was, with nothing to worry him, sleeping by day, reading despatches about the battles by night. . . ."

"He's thirsty again, the beast, he's making for the water," said the militiaman.

"Who is?"

"The cat from Sinopli's tobacco shop—he's just gone out for a walk."

"Very well. Suddenly they call His Majesty the tsar right to the direct wire, and tell him: one thing and another, the people are rioting in Petersburg, the soldiers refuse to attack the people, they want to go home. 'Well,' thinks the tsar, 'that's not so bad!' So he summons all the generals, and goes to talk to them with all his medals and ribbons on. 'In Petersburg the people are rioting,' he tells them, 'the soldiers refuse to attack the people, they want to go home. What am I to do? Give me your opinion.' And what d'you think? He looks at the generals, and the generals, old boy, won't give their opinion, they all turn away. . . ."

"Tchk! Tchk! Tchk! What a terrible thing!"

"Only one of them didn't turn away—an old drunkard of a general. 'Your Majesty,' he said, 'only bid me, and I'll lay down my life for you!' But the tsar shook his head and

smiled bitterly. 'Of all my subjects,' he said, 'only one faithful servant remains to me, and he's drunk from morning till night. I see my reign has come to an end. Give me a sheet of embossed paper, I want to sign my abdication.' "

"And did he?"

"He signed it, and burst into tears."

"Tchk! Tchk! Tchk! What a terrible thing!"

Just then a tall man with a very big peaked cap pulled low over his brows, passed down the street in front of the shop. The empty sleeve of his tunic was thrust into his belt. He turned his face upon the men seated in front of the shop, his white teeth showing distinctly in the moonlight.

"That's the fourth time that man has gone by," said the watchman in a low voice.

"He must be a bandit."

"The war has bred them. It has, old chap! They've appeared where there weren't any before. They're artists in their way."

Far away a clock in a belfry chimed three, and the cocks crowed immediately, for the second time. The one-armed man again appeared in the street. This time he made straight for the two men, going right up to the shop. They regarded him in silence. The watchman suddenly exclaimed in a hurried whisper:

"We're lost, Ivan—give a whistle!"

The militiaman began to draw out his whistle, but the one-armed man rushed up to him and kicked him in the chest, immediately afterwards hitting the night watchman over the head with the handle of his revolver. At that moment another man ran up to the entrance. This one was a stocky fellow with a bristling moustache, wearing a soldier's greatcoat. He threw himself upon the militiaman, twisting his hands behind his back with strong, swift movements.

The one-armed man and the stocky fellow began to work on the lock in silence. They broke into the shop, dragging with them the stunned watchman and the bound militiaman, and closing the door behind them.

Everything was over in a few minutes, and the jewels and gold tied up in two bundles. Then the stocky fellow said: "And what about these?" and kicked at the militiaman who was lying on the floor at the foot of the counter.

"Dear, kind friends, please don't!" implored the militia-man softly. "Please don't, kind friends!"

"Come on!" said the one-armed man harshly.

"They'll inform, I tell you!"

"Come on, you swine!"

Arkady Zhadov, picking up one of the bundles in his teeth, levelled his Mauser at his companion. The latter grinned and moved towards the door. The street was as empty as ever. They went out calmly, turned the corner, and strode off towards the "Château Cabernet."

On the way Zhadov raged at the stocky man again: "Swine, bandit, dirty dog! None of that if you want to work with me! Understand?"

"All right!"

"And now, give us the bundle. Go and get the boat ready this minute. I'm going for my wife. We must be at sea by dawn."

"Are we going to Yalta?"

"That's none of your business. It's I who'll decide whether we're to go to Yalta or Constantinople."

\* XLI \*

Katya was alone. Telegin and Dasha had gone to Petrograd. Katya had seen them off at the station—they had behaved as if in a dream—and returned home in the dusk.

The house was empty. Marfusha and Liza had gone to a meeting for domestic servants. In the dining room, where the smell of cigarette smoke and flowers still lingered, a pot of flowering cherry stood amidst the litter of the previous meal. Katya watered it from a carafe, cleared away the things, and sat down at the table without turning on the light, her face towards the window, through which she could see the light dying out of the cloudy sky. In the dining room, a grandfather clock ticked away against the wall. One's heart might burst from grief, but the clock would go on ticking just the same. Katya sat motionless for a long time, but at last picked up her down shawl from an armchair, threw it over her shoulders, and went to Dasha's room.

The striped mattress of the dismantled bed could barely be distinguished in the twilight, an empty hatbox stood on

a chair, and the floor was strewn with papers and bits of material. When Katya saw that Dasha had taken away all her most trifling possessions, leaving nothing behind and forgetting nothing, she was wounded to the point of tears. She sat down on the bed, on the striped mattress and here too, as in the dining room, remained motionless.

The dining-room clock struck ten with hollow strokes. Katya settled the shawl on her shoulders and went to the kitchen. She stood for a moment listening, and then, standing on tiptoe, reached for the housekeeping book on the shelf, tore an empty leaf out of it, and wrote in pencil: "Liza and Marfusha, you ought to be ashamed of leaving the house all day." A tear dropped on to the paper. Katya placed the note on the kitchen table and went to her bedroom. There she hastily undressed, crept into bed, and fell quiet.

The kitchen door banged at midnight, and Liza and Marfusha came in, stamping noisily and conversing loudly. They could be heard moving about the kitchen, then there was a moment's silence, and they both burst out laughing—they had read the note. Katya lay blinking and motionless.

At last all was quiet in the kitchen. The clock struck one, hollow and sleepless as ever. Katya turned over on to her back, kicked off the blanket, drew a few laboured breaths, as if she could not get enough air into her lungs, then leaped out of bed, turned on the light, and, screwing up her eyes, crossed over to the great cheval glass. Her thin chemise ended above her knees. She cast an anxious, rapid glance at herself, as at a familiar image, and, her chin trembling, moved closer to the mirror, lifting up a strand of hair on the right of her head. "Yes, of course—there it is! And there's another!" She examined her face all over. "Of course, of course! In another year I'll be quite grey, and then—an old woman. . . ." She turned out the light and lay down again, covering her eyes with her forearm, near the elbow. "Not an hour of joy my whole life! And now it's all over. Nobody's arms to go round me, nobody to say 'My darling,' 'My sweet one,' 'My joy'. . . ."

Amidst bitter thoughts and regrets Katya suddenly remembered a wet sandy path through a meadow, blue in the rain, and great lime trees. . . . Along the path went herself—Katya—in a brown dress and black apron. The sand crunched beneath her slippers. Katya felt how light she was, how

slender, her hair ruffled by the breeze, and beside her, not in the path, but on the wet grass, walked the schoolboy Alyosha, pushing his bicycle. Katya was turning aside to conceal a laugh.... Alyosha was saying in hollow tones: "I know there's no hope for me. I only came to tell you that. I'll end up my days at a railway station in some Godforsaken hole. Goodbye...." Then he had got on to his bicycle and begun riding over the meadow, leaving a damp track behind him in the grass.... His back in his grey jacket was bent over the handles, and his white cap was hidden by the foliage of the trees. "Alyosha, come back!" Katya had cried.

...Was it possible that she, the victim of insomnia, had once stood on that damp path, with the summer breeze, smelling faintly of rain, billowing her black pinafore? Katya sat up in bed, clutching at her head, her elbows on her bare knees, while the dim lights of lanterns, fine snow, the wind blowing through the naked trees, the dreary hopeless squealing of sleigh runners, the cold eyes of Bessonov close to her own, all came back to her.... The luxury of weakness, of helplessness.... The loathsome thrill of curiosity....

Katya lay back. In the stillness of the house a bell rang shrilly. Katya turned cold. The bell rang again. Liza, half-asleep and puffing crossly, passed barefoot along the passage, rattled the chain on the front door, and in another moment was knocking at the door of the bedroom: "A telegram for you, Ma'am."

Katya, wincing, took the narrow envelope, tore it open, and unfolded it. The words swam before her eyes.

"Liza," she said, looking up at the girl, whose lips were beginning to tremble from fear, "Nikolai Ivanovich is dead."

Liza shrieked and burst out crying. "Go!" said Katya. Then she read over a second time the hateful letters on the telegraph strips:

"Nikolai Ivanovich died of severe wounds received at his glorious post while fulfilling his duty stop his body will be transferred to Moscow at expense of Union...."

Katya was overcome by a sense of nausea; her head reeled, and, reaching out towards the pillows, she fell unconscious....

The next day she was visited by the well-known public figure and liberal, Prince Kapustin-Unzhesky, that same bearded, rosy gentleman she had listened to on the first

day of the revolution in the Lawyers' Club. Taking both her hands in his, and pressing them to his shaggy waistcoat, he began telling her that, in the name of the organization in which he had worked with the late Nikolai Ivanovich, in the name of the city of Moscow, of which he was now assistant commissar, in the name of Russia, he wished to express inconsolable regret for the untimely death of a glorious champion of principle.

Prince Kapustin-Unzhesky was by nature so happy, healthy, and good-natured, he was so sincerely grieved, from his beard and waistcoat came such a consoling smell of cigars, that for a moment Katya really felt a little comforted. Raising to his face her eyes, brilliant from sleeplessness, she parted her dry lips:

"Thank you for speaking so kindly of Nikolai Ivanovich."

The Prince produced an enormous handkerchief and wiped his eyes. Having fulfilled his painful task he left, and the fantastic roaring of his car could be heard in the road. Katya once again started pacing up and down the room. She halted before some photographs of an unknown general with a leonine head, picked up an album, a book, a Chinese box with a heron holding a frog in its beak on the lid, and resumed her pacing, looking at the wallpaper, the curtains. She did not touch her dinner. "Won't you just try a little fruit jelly?" urged Liza. Her teeth clenched, Katya shook her head. She had written Dasha a short letter, but destroyed it immediately.

She thought of lying down and having a sleep. But lying in bed was like lying in one's coffin—after the night she had spent she was afraid to go to bed. Hardest of all to bear, was her hopeless pity for Nikolai Ivanovich. He had been a good, kind, foolish man . . . he should have been loved for himself, and she had tortured him. That was why he had gone grey so early. Katya looked out of the window at the dim, pallid sky, tugging at her fingers till the joints cracked.

There was a memorial service the next day, and two days later the remains of Nikolai Ivanovich Smokovnikov were buried. Splendid speeches were uttered at his grave—the departed was compared to an albatross perishing in the deep, to a man who had borne a flaming torch throughout a glorious life. A short, spectacled individual who turned out to be a well-known socialist-revolutionary, arrived late for the

funeral. "Let me pass, please, Citizeness!" he barked at Katya, and, pushing right up to the grave, he made a speech proving that the death of Nikolai Ivanovich was fresh evidence of the correctness of the agrarian policy pursued by his—the speaker's—party. The earth crumbled beneath his untidy boots, and a clod fell with a thud on the coffin. A nervous spasm constricted Katya's throat. She slipped unnoticed out of the crowd and went home.

She only had one desire—to have a bath and go to bed. But when she got into the house she was seized with a horror of the stripy wallpaper, the photographs, the heron on the lid of the Chinese box, the crumpled tablecloth in the dining room, the dusty windows. How wretched it all was! She ordered the bath to be filled, and let herself into the warm water with a groan. Now she felt a mortal weariness in all her limbs. She could hardly drag herself to the bedroom, and fell asleep outside the bedclothes. Bells, steps, voices, somebody knocking at the door, mingled with her sleep, and she did not reply.

When she woke up it was quite dark. Her heart contracted painfully.

"What? What?" she cried in wild terror, sitting up in bed, hoping just for a moment that all this horror had been only a dream. Then, for another moment, she was overcome with a feeling of the injustice of it all. Why should she be tormented like this? And at last, coming wide awake, she smoothed back her hair, put her slippers on her bare feet, and said to herself with calm clarity: "I've had enough."

With leisurely movements, Katya opened the door of the hanging medicine closet and began reading the labels on the bottles. Uncorking a small bottle of opium, she sniffed at it, and went, holding it tight in her clenched hand, to look for a glass in the dining room. On the way there, however, she was brought up sharp by a light in the drawing room. "Is that you, Liza?" asked Katya in a low voice. Opening the door a little way she saw a tall man in a military tunic, with a black bandage round his shaven head, seated on the sofa. He rose hastily. Katya's knees began to give way, and she felt a sinking sensation in the pit of her stomach. The man looked at her with terrifying, dilated, ghastly eyes. His straight lips were tightly compressed. It was Roshchin—Vadim Petrovich. Katya raised her hands to



her bosom. Roshchin, without taking his eyes off her, said in slow, resolute tones:

"I have come to pay my respects to you. Your maid told me of your misfortune. I stayed because I felt I must tell you that I am at your disposal, that I am ready to devote my whole life to you."

His voice shook as he uttered the last words and his gaunt countenance was suffused with a dark flush. Katya pressed her hands tight against her breast. Something in her eyes told him that he must go to her, and help her. As he approached, Katya said, her teeth chattering:

"How d'you do, Vadim Petrovich!"

He raised his arm involuntarily as if to put it round her—so frail and sad did she look with the bottle in her clenched fist—but the next moment he let it fall, lowering his eyes. With feminine intuition Katya realized in a flash that she, small, unhappy, sinful, helpless, burdened with unshed tears, grasping a miserable phial of opium, was dear and indispensable to this man, who was waiting in severe silence to take her soul into his own. Restraining her tears, unable to open her mouth to utter a single word, Katya bent over Vadim Petrovich's hand and held her lips and face against it.

\* XLII \*

Dasha sat looking out of the window, her elbows on the marble sill. Over the dark woods at the end of Kameno-Ostrov Street, the sky was half covered by the sunset. Miracles were going on up there. Ivan Ilyich sat beside Dasha and gazed at her without moving, although now he might have moved as much as he liked, for Dasha would not go away from this room, with the crimson reflection of the sunset glow on its white walls.

"How sad, and how sweet," said Dasha. "As if we were floating in an airship. . . ."

Ivan Ilyich nodded. Dasha removed her arms from the window sill.

"I'm longing for music," she said. "When did I last play? Not since the beginning of the war! And fancy, the war's still going on. And we. . . ."

Ivan Ilyich stirred. Dasha went on hurriedly:

"When the war's over, we'll go in for music. . . . Do you remember how we lay on the beach, Ivan, and how the sea came up over the sand? Do you remember how the sea looked—a faded blue? I felt as if I had loved you all my life. . . ."

Ivan Ilyich moved again, as though about to say something, but Dasha exclaimed hastily: "The kettle's boiling!" and ran out of the room, stopping, however, in the doorway. In the dusk he could see only her face, the hand holding the curtain, and a leg in a grey stocking. Then Dasha disappeared. Ivan Ilyich clasped his hands behind his head and closed his eyes.

Dasha and Telegin had arrived that day at two o'clock in the afternoon. They had had to sit all night on their luggage in the corridor of the overcrowded train. The moment they arrived, Dasha started unpacking, peering into corners, dusting everywhere; she was delighted with the flat, but was determined to rearrange everything in it. And this had to be done at once. The hall porter was called upstairs, and with the aid of Ivan Ilyich cupboards and sofas were moved from one room to another. When all the changes had been made, Dasha asked Ivan Ilyich to open the *fortochki*\* everywhere, and went to have a bath. She splashed about for a long time, did something to her face and her hair, and when she came out forbade Ivan Ilyich to enter now this, now the other room, although his one desire the whole day was to keep meeting Dasha and looking at her. When dusk fell, Dasha at last settled down. Ivan Ilyich, washed and shaved, went into the drawing room and sat down beside her. It was the first time they had been alone in quiet since leaving Moscow. As if afraid of this quiet, Dasha kept on talking. A long time afterwards she admitted to Ivan Ilyich that she had suddenly been terrified that he would say to her in a "special" voice: "Well, Dasha, what about it?"

She went to see about the kettle. Ivan Ilyich sat there with his eyes shut. Although she had gone out, the air was still full of her presence. There was an indescribable charm about the tapping of her heels on the kitchen floor. Suddenly there was the tinkling of breaking china, and Dasha's wailing voice exclaimed: "A cup!" A warm joy enveloped

\* Small hinged windowpanes used for ventilation.

Ivan Ilyich. "When I wake up tomorrow, it won't be just another morning—Dasha will be there!" He got up quickly, and Dasha reappeared in the doorway.

"I've broken a cup! Do you really want tea, Ivan?"

"Not a bit!"

She went up to him, and since it was now quite dark in the room, she placed her hands on his shoulders.

"What were you thinking about?" she asked softly.

"You."

"I know that. But *what* were you thinking about me?"

In the dusk her faintly-discernible face seemed to bear a frown, though she was really smiling, breathing regularly, her breast rising and falling.

"I was thinking how queer it all seems," he said. "You are you, and you are my wife. Then it suddenly seemed quite simple, and I was going to tell you about it, and now I can't understand it again."

"O-oh!" said Dasha. "Sit down, and I'll sit beside you."

Ivan Ilyich sank into a deep chair, and Dasha perched on its arm. "What else were you thinking?"

"I sat there, while you were in the kitchen, and said to myself: 'A marvellous being has come to live in this house.' That was bad, I suppose."

"Yes," replied Dasha thoughtfully, "that's all wrong."

"Do you love me, Dasha?"

"O-oh!" she threw back her head. "I love you right up to the birch tree."

"What birch tree?"

"Didn't you know? There's a mound at the end of every life, and on it a weeping birch tree."

Ivan Ilyich put his arms round her, and she gave herself up with tenderness to his embrace. As on that day, long ago on the seashore, their kiss was long, and they were breathless.

"Oh, Ivan!" cried Dasha and put her arms round his neck. She could hear the violent beating of his heart, and she felt sorry for him. She rose with a sigh from the arm of the chair, and said, with the utmost simplicity: "Come, Ivan!"

Five days after her arrival, Dasha had a letter from Katya. Katya wrote to tell her that Nikolai Ivanovich was dead.

"...I went through a period of misery and despair. I clearly realized that I should be alone now for ever. Oh, how terrible that was! It was so terrible that I made up my mind to make an end of it immediately. You know what I mean. I was saved by a miracle. Perhaps it was just a coincidence. But no, it was a real miracle. I can't write about it. I'll tell you when we meet."

Katya's letter, and the news of her brother-in-law's death were a shock to Dasha. She had made up her mind to go to Moscow immediately, when the next day brought another letter from Katya, who wrote that she was packing to move to Petrograd, and hoped Katya could find her a not too expensive room. In a postscript she added: "Vadim Petrovich Roshchin will come to see you. He'll tell you all about me. He is a brother, a father to me, my friend for life."

Dasha and Telegin were strolling along an alley one fine Sunday in April. In the cool, springtime blue of the sky floated the tattered fragment of a cloud, melting in the sunshine. The sunshine penetrated the alley as if through layers of water, and rested shimmering on Dasha's white dress. The dry, reddish stems of the pines seemed to be advancing towards them, their summits murmuring, their branches rustling. Dasha looked at Ivan Ilyich—he had taken off his cap, and was smiling, his brow contracted. She had a sensation of complete peace and her heart was full-filled with the beauty of the day, with the joy of breathing and walking, of having surrendered so entirely to the day, and to the man by whose side she was walking.

"Ivan," said Dasha, and smiled.

"What is it?" he asked, also smiling.

"Never mind!"

"What were you going to say?"

"Another time!"

"I know what you were going to say!"

Dasha turned swiftly on him.

"I bet you don't!"

They had reached a great pine tree. Ivan Ilyich picked off a scrap of bark, covered with soft drops of resin, broke it between his fingers, and looked kindly at Dasha from under his brows.

"Oh yes, I do!"

Dasha's hand shook.

"You see," she said in a whisper. "I feel as if I should have to overflow into some other greater joy. I'm simply full to the brim. . . ."

Ivan Ilyich nodded. They were now walking through a glade carpeted with tender green grass and yellow buttercups, swaying in the wind. The wind fluttered the skirt of Dasha's dress. Every now and then as she walked she kept bending to pull down her skirt, each time saying: "What a nuisance this wind is!"

Beyond the glade rose the high iron railings of the palace, their gilded spearheads dulled by the passage of time. Dasha got a pebble in her shoe. Ivan Ilyich squatted down, removed the shoe from Dasha's warm, white-stockinged foot, kissing it close to the toes. Putting her shoe on again, and stamping her foot into place, Dasha said:

"I want to have a child from you, that's what I was going to say."

\* XLIII \*

Ekaterina Dmitrevna found a room not far from Dasha, in a wooden house kept by two old ladies—Klavdia Ivanovna and Sofochka. Klavdia Ivanovna had been a singer at some remote period, and Sofochka was her companion. In the morning Klavdia Ivanovna would touch up her eyebrows, don a wig of raven hue, and sit down to play patience. Sofochka, who did the housekeeping, had a masculine voice. The house was clean, crammed with all sorts of old-fashioned doilies, little screens, and yellowed portraits dating from the irretrievable days of youth. In the mornings there was a smell of good coffee in the rooms; Klavdia Ivanovna, who could not bear the smell of cooking, used to sniff salts while dinner was being made, and Sofochka would call out in a man's voice from the kitchen: "What can I do about the smell—you can't fry potatoes in eau de Cologne!" In the evenings, oil lamps with frosted globes were lit. The old ladies were very kind to Katya.

She lived peacefully in this old-time comfort, untouched as it was by the tempest of time. She got up early, did her own room, and sat down at the window to mend her clothes,

darn stockings, or alter her former smart clothes to something more simple. After breakfast she usually went to the Isles, taking with her a book or some embroidery, and seating herself on a bench at her favourite spot, close to the tiny lake, watching the children at play on the sand heap, or reading, working, thinking. At six o'clock she went back and had dinner with Dasha. At eleven, Dasha and Telegin saw her home—the sisters walking arm in arm in front, Ivan Ilyich whistling, his cap on the back of his head, going behind them, "to cover the rear," for it was none too safe to walk about the streets at night now.

Every day Katya wrote to Roshchin, who was all this time on a special mission at the front. She told him in conscientious detail everything she had done and thought during the day. Roshchin had begged her to do this, assuring her in his replies: "Ekaterina Dmitrevna, I appreciate your writing that today when you were crossing Elagin Bridge it began to drizzle, and as you had no umbrella you waited under the trees till it stopped. I want to know all the details of your life, I don't know how I could go on living without them."

Katya knew Roshchin was exaggerating, and that he could have got on very well without knowing the "details of her life," but the idea of having to be alone with herself even for a single day, was so terrifying that she tried not to think, but simply to believe her life really was dear and necessary to Vadim Petrovich. And so whatever she now did had a special significance. Once she lost her thimble, and after looking for it a whole hour discovered it had been on her finger all the time—how Vadim Petrovich would laugh when he knew how absent-minded she had become! Katya now behaved as if she didn't belong to herself alone. Once, sitting over her work at the window, deep in thought, she noticed that her fingers were trembling. Raising her head, she threaded her needle into the skirt lying in her lap, and stared in front of her for a long time, until at last her glance lighted upon her thin face in the wardrobe glass opposite, the large mournful eyes, and the smoothly-brushed hair knotted at the back of her head. "Can it be I?" she asked herself. Lowering her eyes she went on sewing, but her heart was beating violently, and she pricked her finger; lifting it to her mouth, she again looked into the mirror—but this time

it was herself she saw reflected, and the image was less beautiful than the first had been. . . . That same night she wrote to Roshchin: "I've been thinking about you all day. I do so miss you, dear friend—I just sit at the window and wait. Something long forgotten is being revived inside me—girlish dreams. . . ."

Even Dasha, who had become very absent-minded in her preoccupation with the subtle relations between herself and Ivan Ilyich—relations which she was convinced had had no parallel since the creation of the world—noticed the change in Katya, and one day, as they were sitting over their evening tea, argued long and earnestly that Katya ought always to wear plain, black, high-necked dresses. "You really must," she said. "You can't see yourself, Katya, you look about nineteen. She looks younger than me, doesn't she, Ivan?"

"Yes—I mean not exactly, but. . . ."

"You don't understand a thing!" said Dasha. "It isn't age that counts with women, it's something quite different. Age has nothing to do with it."

The small sum of money remaining to Katya after the death of Nikolai Ivanovich soon came to an end. Telegin advised her to sell her flat in Panteleimonov Street, which had stood empty since March. Katya agreed, and she and Dasha drove over to take away a few things rendered dear by their associations.

When she got to the second floor and saw the familiar oak door, with the brass plate inscribed "Nikolai Ivanovich Smokovnikov," Katya felt that her life had now come full circle. The old, well-remembered porter, who, wheezing, angrily and sleepily, his coat flung over his shoulders, the collar turned up to protect his throat, had so often opened the street door to her after midnight, invariably switching off the light before Katya had time to get upstairs, now raised his cap to them and unlocked the door of the flat with his own key. Letting them pass in before him, he said soothingly:

"You may rest assured, Ekaterina Dmitrevna, that not a crumb has been lost, I watched over my lodgers day and night. Their son was killed at the front, or they'd be living here still, they were very pleased with the flat."

The hall was dark and had an unlived-in air, and the curtains were drawn in all the rooms. Katya went into the dining room and turned on the electric switch. The cut-glass

chandelier blazed out over the table, with its cover of grey cloth, on which still stood the porcelain flower basket with a withered branch of mimosa in it. The high-backed chairs upholstered in leather—indifferent witnesses of the gay scenes once enacted here—stood against the walls. A door was ajar in the towering, carved sideboard, revealing upside-down wineglasses. The oval Venetian mirror was covered with dust, but on its top there still slept a golden boy, his hand stretching over a golden flourish. . . .

Katya stood motionless in the doorway.

"Dasha!" she cried softly. "Dasha—do you remember? Fancy—there's nobody left, now!"

Then she went into the drawing room, turned on the great chandelier there, and looked round, shrugging her shoulders. The cubic and futurist pictures, which had once seemed so daring, so sinister, now hung on the walls, dingy and pitiful, like discarded carnival decorations.

"Remember that one, Katya?" said Dasha, pointing to the "Modern Venus," squatting with her flower in the yellow corner. "I used to think, then, that she was to blame for all our troubles."

She laughed, and began looking through a pile of music. Katya went into her old bedroom. Here everything was just as it had been three years ago, when, dressed for travelling, with a veil on, she had run back to her room for her gloves.

But there seemed to be a dull film over all now, and everything was much smaller than she had remembered it. Katya opened a wardrobe, crammed with odds and ends of lace and silk, scraps of material, stockings, slippers. All these trifles which had once seemed so important to her, still smelled faintly of scent. Katya began aimlessly looking through them—every one of them was bound up with memories of a life gone for ever.

Suddenly the stillness of the house was shattered, and filled with the sound of music. It was Dasha playing that very sonata which she had been practising while preparing for her examinations three years before. Katya closed the wardrobe door with a bang, went into the drawing room, and sat down beside her sister.

"Isn't this lovely, Katya?" said Dasha, half-turning.

She played a few more bars and picked up another piece of music from the floor.



"Let's go," said Katya. "I've got a headache."

"What about your things?"

"I don't want to take a thing from here. I'll have the piano moved to your flat, and never mind anything else."

Katya came to dinner stimulated by rapid walking, in high spirits, and wearing a new hat with a blue veil.

"I almost got caught," she said, touching Dasha's cheek with warm lips, "and as it is, I got my shoes wet. Give me something to change to."

Taking off her gloves, she went to the drawing-room window. The rain, which had threatened several times already, was now pouring down in a grey flood, revolving in sudden gusts of wind, running down the drain pipes with a resounding noise. Far below could be seen scurrying umbrellas. Something white flashed past the window through the gathering gloom, followed by a crash which made Dasha gasp.

"D'you know who's coming to see you today?" said Katya, a smile hovering over her lips.

Before Dasha could ask who she meant, there was a ring at the front door and she ran to open it. Katya heard Ivan Ilyich give a laugh and wipe his feet on the mat, and then he and Dasha, talking and laughing loudly, passed the dining-room door and went into the bedroom. Katya put down her gloves, removed her hat and smoothed down her hair, the tender smile still hovering round her lips.

Ivan Ilyich, flushed and cheerful, his hair still wet, told them the events of the day over dinner. At the Baltic Works, as at all factories and plants now, the workers were in a turmoil. The Soviets invariably supported their demands. Private businesses were closing down one after another, and state-owned enterprises were working at a loss, but in these times of war and revolution no one worried about profits. There had been another meeting at the works. Some Bolsheviks had spoken, and they all said the same thing: "Stop the war! No compromise with the bourgeois government! No negotiations with the owners! All power to the Soviets—they'll know what to do!"

"I tried to speak, too. But not a bit of it! They dragged me off the platform. Vasili Rublev got up and said: 'I know you're not our enemy, so why talk a lot of rot—you've stuffed yourself up with idiotic notions!' 'Vasya!' I said to him, 'the works will be at a standstill in six months, and there'll be

nothing to eat!" And this is how he answered me: 'By the New Year all factories will be in the hands of the workers, Comrade—there won't be a single bourgeois left in the republic—even for stud purposes! And there won't be any more money. Work and live—everything belongs to you. It's the social revolution—try and get that into your head!' He promises all that by the New Year."

Ivan Ilyich laughed quietly, shaking his head at the same time, however, and began gathering up crumbs on the tablecloth. Dasha sighed.

"I feel there are great trials ahead," she said.

"Yes," said Ivan Ilyich, "the war isn't over, that's the thing! After all, what has changed since February? They've got rid of the tsar and now there's still greater disorder. And a handful of lawyers and professors—very cultured people, of course!—are assuring the whole nation: have patience, go on fighting, and in good time we'll give you a British Constitution, or one still better. They don't know Russia, these professors. They've learned nothing from Russian history. The Russian people are not just an abstract quantity. They're an emotional, gifted, strong people. Look how the Russian peasant made his way in his bast shoes to the Pacific coast! A German will stay where he is, striving and enduring for a hundred years. But the Russian peasant isn't so patient. He can be inspired by dreams of conquering the universe. He'll start out on it in his homespun trousers and bast shoes, an axe in his belt. And the professors think they can confine the raging sea of people within a decent constitution. Yes, we are destined to be witnesses of very serious events!"

Standing at the table, Dasha poured out the coffee. Suddenly she put down the coffeepot and pressed close to Ivan Ilyich, burying her face against his chest.

"Come, Dasha, don't be upset," he said, stroking her hair. "Nothing so very dreadful has happened so far.... We've been in tighter places than this before. I remember—are you listening?—we were approaching a place called 'The Rotten Limes'...."

He began reminiscing about his wartime misadventures. Katya glanced at the grandfather clock and went out of the dining room. Her husband's strong, quiet face and smiling grey eyes calmed Dasha: with such a man one need have no fear! She listened to the end to the story of "The Rotten

Limes," and went into the bedroom to powder her face. Katya was seated at the dressing table, making up.

"Dasha," she said, in a small voice. "Have you got any of that scent left? You know—the Paris bottle!"

Dasha sank down on the floor in front of her sister and looked at her in profound astonishment.

"You preening your feathers, Katya?" she whispered.

Katya blushed and nodded.

"What's the matter with you today, Katya?"

"I tried to tell you, but you wouldn't listen—Vadim Petrovich is coming tonight—he'll come straight here from the station. He can't come to me—it's so late. . . ."

At half past nine there was a ring at the door. Katya, Dasha, and Telegin rushed out into the hall. Telegin opened the door, and in stepped Roshchin, his creased and crumpled greatcoat flung on his shoulders, his cap drawn down well over his eyes. A smile softened his lean, sombre, deeply tanned face, when he caught sight of Katya. She looked at him in joyful confusion. He threw his coat and cap on to a chair, and shaking hands all round, said in a powerful, but slightly muffled voice: "Forgive me for bursting in on you so late—I felt I must see you tonight, Ekaterina Dmitrevna—and you, Darya Dmitrevna." Katya's eyes were flooded with light.

"I'm glad you came, Vadim Petrovich," she said kissing the top of his head with quivering lips as he bent over her hand.

"You should have brought your things," said Ivan Ilyich, "we won't let you go, you may be sure of that!"

"He can sleep on the ottoman in the dining room," said Dasha. "We'll put a chair at one end if it's too short."

Roshchin heard as in a dream what these elegant, kindly folk were saying to him. He had arrived in a state of exasperation engendered by sleepless nights in the train, days spent in squeezing through carriage windows in search of food, and in incessant struggle amidst deafening obscenities, for six inches of standing room. He could not shake off the grotesqueness of the situation: here were these three people almost unbearably good-looking and clean, smelling so nice, greeting him on a gleaming parquet floor—and it was him,

Roshchin, they were so glad to see. . . . As in a dream he gazed into Katya's beautiful eyes, which seemed to be saying: happy, happy, happy. . . .

Settling his belt and straightening his shoulders, he heaved a deep sigh.

"Thank you," he said. "Where shall I go?"

They took him to the bathroom to have a wash, and then to the dining room for something to eat. He ate without noticing what was put before him, and, his hunger soon satisfied, pushed aside the plate and lit a cigarette.

His stern, lean, clean-shaven face, which had so alarmed Katya when he appeared in the doorway, had become softer now, but he seemed to be still more exhausted. His great hands, on which the light from the orange lamp shade fell, trembled as he struck the match. Katya, her face sheltered by the lamp shade, looked at him and felt that she loved the very hairs on the back of his hands, the very buttons on his crumpled, dark-brown tunic. She noticed that he was apt to clench his jaws when speaking, and let the words come from between his closed teeth. The phrases dropped out in jerky disorder. It was obvious that, conscious of all this, he was trying to stifle some long-standing, wrathful excitement in himself. . . . Exchanging glances with her sister and husband, Dasha told Roshchin she was sure he was tired, and asked him if he wouldn't like to go to bed.

He flushed suddenly, and sat bolt upright in his chair.

"I didn't come here to go to bed. . . . No . . . no. . . ."

He went out on to the balcony and stood there in the night beneath the fine rain. Dasha glanced towards the balcony and shook her head. From outside, Roshchin called into the room:

"Forgive me, Darya Dmitrevna! It's those four sleepless nights. . . ."

He reappeared, smoothing the hair over the top of his head, and resumed his place.

"I've come straight from headquarters," he said. "I bring exceedingly discouraging information to the Minister for War. . . . I felt sad when I saw you all. Let me tell you everything: I have nobody in the world so near to me as you are, Ekaterina Dmitrevna. . . ."

Katya turned pale. Ivan Ilyich stood against the wall, his hands behind his back. Dasha gazed at Roshchin wild-eyed.

"Unless a miracle happens," he said, "we are lost. The army no longer exists. The front is breaking up... soldiers are leaving on the roofs of railway carriages... there is no human possibility of halting the collapse of the front. It's like a tidal wave.... The Russian soldier has lost all conception of what he's fighting for, has lost all respect for the war, and everything connected with the war—the State, Russia. The soldiers firmly believe that someone only has to shout the word: 'Peace!' and the war will end that same day... we, the gentry, are the only ones who don't want it to end. The soldier has spat upon the place where, for three years, he has been a dupe, has thrown down his rifle, and can no longer be made to go on fighting.... By the autumn, when the whole ten million has surged back, Russia will have ceased to exist as a sovereign state."

He set his jaws so savagely that the muscles in his cheeks twitched. Nobody said a word, and he continued in the same muffled tones:

"I'm carrying a plan to the Minister for War. A few generals have drawn up a plan for the salvation of the front.... Most original it is... whatever happens, the Allies won't be able to reproach our generals of not wishing to continue the war. This is the plan: to declare wholesale demobilization at the shortest possible notice, that is to say to organize the existing desertion, and thus save railway transport, artillery, munitions and food supplies. To give our Allies a firm assurance that we intend to go on with the war. At the same time to form a defence army of loyal units—there are such—in the Volga districts; to start organizing a completely new army, the nucleus to consist of voluntary divisions; simultaneously to support and form guerilla bands.... Supported by supplies from the Ural plants and by Siberian coal and grain, to begin the war all over again...."

"To expose our front to the Germans. To deliver our country up to plunder!" cried Telegin.

"You and I have no country any more—only the place where it used to be." Roshchin clenched his fists as they lay on the tablecloth. "Great Russia ceased to exist at the moment when the people threw down their arms. You don't seem to realize what has already begun.... Will St. Nicholas help you now? They've forgotten how to pray to him.... Great Russia is now merely dung for the fields. Everything

will have to be started all over again; the army, the state—a new soul will have to be breathed into us.”

He drew in strong blasts of air through his nostrils, dropped his head into his hands on the table, and sobbed with hollow, rending sounds. . . .

Katya did not go home that night. Dasha made her sleep with her in her own bed, making up a bed for Ivan Ilyich in his study. Roshchin went out on to the balcony to recover from a scene which had shaken the nerves of all, got soaked in the rain, and, returning to the dining room, apologized. The most sensible thing after all, would be to go to bed. He could hardly keep awake long enough to undress, and when Ivan Ilyich tiptoed in to put out the lamp, Roshchin was asleep, lying on his back, his hands folded on his breast. His gaunt face, the eyelids closed, the lines brought out by the bluish light of the dawn, was that of a man contending with pain.

Katya and Dasha, lying beneath the same blanket, had a long, whispered conversation. Every now and then Dasha stopped to listen. Ivan Ilyich had not yet settled down in his study. “Walking up and down,” said Dasha, “and he’s got to be at the works at seven.” She got up and ran barefoot into her husband’s room. Ivan Ilyich was sitting on his sofa-bed with his shirt off and his braces hanging down, reading a huge book which lay open on his knees.

“Not asleep yet?” he exclaimed, glancing at Dasha with brilliant, unseeing eyes. “Sit down. Look what I’ve found! Listen to this!” He turned back a page or two and began reading:

“Three hundred years ago the wind roamed freely over the forests and plains of Russia, over the huge graveyard known as the Russian land. Nothing was left but the fire-ravaged walls of towns, heaps of ashes marking the places of villages, crosses and bones strewn over the grass-grown roads, flocks of crows, and at night the howling of wolves. Here and there, along tracks in the forest, roamed the last of the robber bands, who had long ago drunk up the proceeds of the Boyar furs, precious goblets, and the pearls wrenched from the frames of icons, which they had stolen in the course of ten years. Russia was robbed and plundered till there was nothing left to take.

"The country was devastated and depopulated. Even the Crimean Tatars had ceased their raids on the Wild Steppe—there was no more booty to steal. During the ten years of the Great Disturbance, usurpers, robbers, and Polish raiders went with fire and sword from end to end of the Russian land. Famine stalked the land—the people ate horse dung and salted human flesh. The Black Pest raged. Survivors wandered north to the White Sea, to the Urals, to Siberia.

"In those terrible days a cowering lad, whom the patriarch had counselled the impoverished Boyars, the merchants who had no market for their goods, and the stern peasants of the northern and Volga districts, to make the tsar of Moscow, was driven in a sleigh over the muddy roads of early spring, towards the charred walls of Moscow, that vast heap of ashes, that ruined and devastated city, cleared with such difficulty of the Polish invaders. The new tsar could do nothing but weep and pray. And he prayed and wept, gazing from his carriage windows at the ragged, savage crowd of Russians, coming out to meet him at the gates of Moscow. The Russian people had not much faith in their new tsar. But life must go on. And they started to live. Money was borrowed from the Stroganov merchants. The town-dwellers began building, the peasants, ploughing the neglected soil. Good folk were sent out on horse and on foot to clear the roads of robbers. Life was hard, austere. Profound obeisances were made to the Crimea, to Lithuania, to the Swedes. The faith was preserved. It was recognized that only one power existed—a strong, adroit, resourceful people. They hoped to live through the hard times, and they succeeded. And once again wastelands, overgrown with burdock, were populated...."

Ivan Ilyich shut the book with a bang.

"You see! And we'll win through this time, too. Great Russia was ruined! And the grandsons of these same ragged peasants who came out with pikes to save Moscow, beat off Carl XII and Napoleon. And the grandson of that boy dragged by force to Moscow, built St. Petersburg. Great Russia ruined, indeed! So long as a single province remained to us, Russia would spring up again on its soil."

He snorted and looked out of the window, through which the grey dawn could be seen ushering in the day. Dasha

leaned her head on his shoulder, and he stroked it, kissing her hair.

"Go back to bed, you scared baby."

Dasha laughed, kissed him goodnight, and left him, turning in the doorway to say:

"Katya does love him so, Ivan."

"Well, he's a fine fellow."

The evening was warm and windless. A smell of petrol blending with the smell of the tarred surface of the road, hung in the air. Along Nevsky Prospekt a motley crowd moved in confusion amidst the smells, clouds of tobacco smoke, and dust. Honking and clattering, official cars dashed past, with fluttering pennants. The shrill voices of the newsboys called out soul-shaking news, no longer believed in by anyone. Vendors of cigarettes, matches, and stolen goods, wound in and out of the crowd. In the squares, soldiers lay about on the grass between the flower beds, nibbling sunflower seeds.

Katya was returning alone from Nevsky Prospekt. She and Roshchin had arranged to meet at about eight o'clock on the embankment. Katya turned into Palace Square. In the darkened windows on the second floor of the grim, blood-red palace, shone the yellow light of electric lamps. There were cars drawn up in front of the main entrance, and soldiers and chauffeurs strolled about, laughing and talking. A courier flew past on a stertorous motor bike—he was a lad wearing a driver's cap, his shirt bellying behind him. An old man with a long grey beard was standing motionless on one of the corner balconies of the palace, his elbow on the top of the rail. Skirting the palace, Katya looked back—the graceful bronze horses on top of the archway of the General Staff were still rearing towards the sunset. She crossed the embankment and sat down on a stone bench near the water's edge. The bluish filigree outlines of the bridges hung over the lazily flowing Neva. The spire of the Peter-Paul Cathedral shone out, its clear gold reflected in the river. A shabby little boat moved over the glittering reflections. The paling globe of the setting sun was descending behind the roofs and columns of smoke on the Petersburg Side, in an orange glow.



Her hands folded in her lap, Katya sat serenely looking at the sunset, patiently waiting for Vadim Petrovich. He approached her from behind, so that she did not notice him, and stood there, leaning on the stone parapet, looking down at her. Feeling his presence, she glanced behind her, and got up, smiling. He was looking at her with a strange, astonished expression on his face. She went up the stone steps to the embankment and took Roshchin's arm. They began walking on, and Katya said softly:

"What is it?"

His lips twitched, and he lifted one shoulder for all reply. They crossed the Troitsky Bridge, and as they entered Kameno-Ostrov Street, Roshchin nodded in the direction of a great mansion faced with brown tiles. The wide windows of its conservatory were brilliantly lit up. A few motorcycles stood at the entrance.

This was the house of a famous dancer, now used by the Bolsheviks for their General Headquarters. Day and night the clatter of typewriters came from it. Every day a great crowd of workers, returned soldiers, sailors, gathered in front of the house, and the leader of the Bolshevik Party would come out on to a balcony and say that the workers and peasants must take power by storm, must immediately put an end to the war, and establish in their own land and throughout the world, a new and just regime.

"I stood here in the crowd a short time ago, and listened," said Roshchin through his teeth. "Fire and brimstone descends from this balcony and the crowd mops it up. I don't know any longer who are the strangers in this city—ourselves, or that lot." He nodded towards the balcony. "Nobody listens to us any longer. We mutter words devoid of sense. When I was coming here I knew I was a Russian. But now I'm here, I feel alien. I don't understand. . . ."

As they went further along the street, they were overtaken by a man in a torn coat and straw hat, a pail in one hand, a bundle of posters in the other.

"There's only one thing I'm sure of," said Roshchin turning aside so that she should not see his distorted face, "one spot of life and light in all this chaos, and that's your heart, Katya. You and I must never part."

"I didn't dare to say that to you," replied Katya softly. "Of course we must never part, my dear one."

They had reached the place where the man with the pail had just stuck a notice on the wall, and, both being somewhat overcome, they halted for a moment. In the rays of the lamp could be made out the words: "Attention, everyone! The revolution is in danger!"

"Ekaterina Dmitrevna," said Roshchin, taking her frail hand in his and drawing her slowly along the broad street, which was falling silent in the twilight, with the evening glow still lingering in the sky at the other end. "The years will pass, wars will die out, revolutions will calm down, and only one thing will be left—your kind, tender, loving heart. . . ."

The sound of gay voices, arguments, music, came through the open windows of the great houses. The bowed figure of the man with the pail once more overtook Katya and Roshchin. He pasted up another notice and turned. From beneath the brim of the torn straw hat, eyes burning with hatred fixed a steady glance at them.

*August 1921*









